

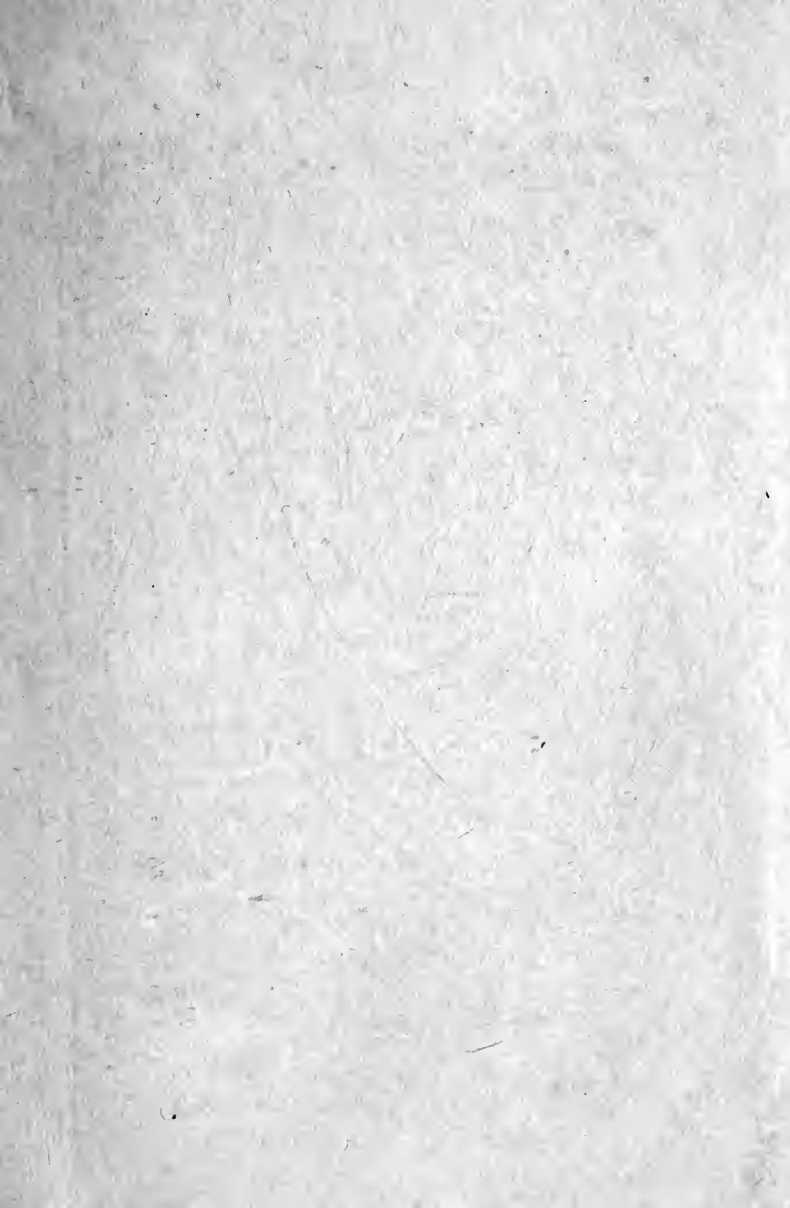
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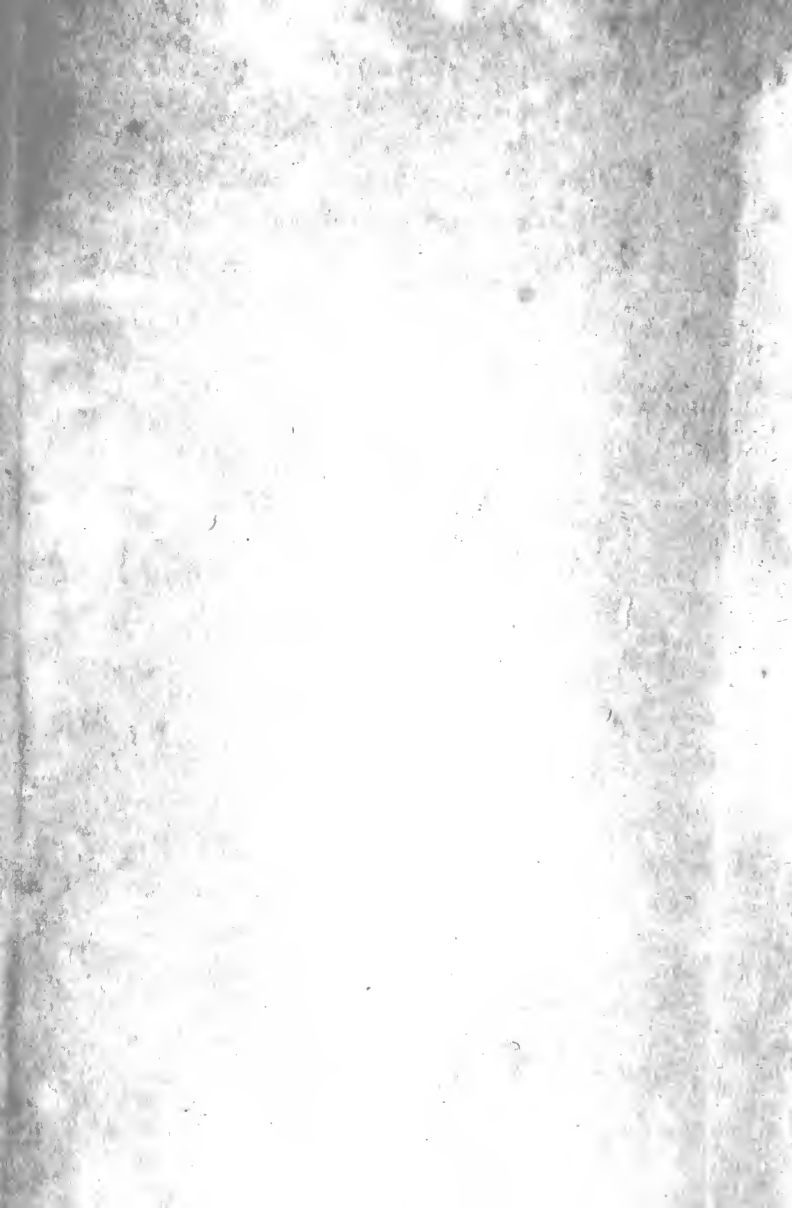
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The spacious west,
And all the teeming regions of the south,
Hold not a quarry to the curious flight
Of knowledge half so tempting or so fair
As man to man.

AKENSIDE.

VOL. II.

[SECOND EDITION.]

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1869.

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CHAPTER I.

The world's great dice are false ; sometimes they go
Extremely high, sometimes extremely low :
Of all her gamesters, he that plays the least,
Lives most at ease, plays most secure and best :
The way to win, is to play fair, and swear
Thyself a servant to the crown of fear :
Fear is the primer of a gamester's skill :
Who fears not bad, stands most unarm'd to ill.
The ill that's wisely fear'd, is half withstood ;
And fear of bad is the best foil to good.

QUARLES' EMBLEMS.



MARRIED.

CHAPTER I.

THE change which had come over Meta struck us more and more painfully as the days went on, and I think the distress it caused me—who perhaps meditated and deliberated over events with more nervous energy and earnestness than was consistent with my comfort—brought a heavy shadow over my life, at a moment when it should have been very different.

That Meta should try to impose upon strangers and mere acquaintances by the false

dignity of her position, would not have seemed half so odd as her thinking to impose upon us. She could not so have meant it, and yet she seemed to do so ; she could not really have thought that her fine dresses and knowledge of the new fashions in society could raise her to much superiority over us, but it seemed as if she did so ;—and certainly whatever she meant, although we loved her so much and intended to be so patient with her, she made us all uncomfortable. The size of our room fretted her and gave her the fidgets, and I can well believe was very trying to her ; and when I invited her into the garden she was sure to tear her flounce with a pea stick, or to get her dress soiled by my favourite seat on the wall. However, I did manage to get her there one afternoon, for I wanted much to talk with her alone, and in the cottage there was little possibility of privacy.

“Meta,” I said, with my usual earnestness

shewing itself in my face, "I feel sure now that I am going away that——will you not come home?"

She turned as if scared and looked wonderingly and half contemptuously at the scene which had now the almost sacred charm of familiarity in my eyes: the dock leaves and the close fed meadow on one side the wall, and the poor bit of garden ground on the other, flanking the whitewashed cottage with its many weather stains. All this her eyes seemed to take in, and probably contrasted with her luxurious life in May fair.

"I do not see the necessity," she replied, at length, coldly enough; "I cost nothing there. I am——"

"That," said I, eagerly and catching at the hope that this really was her motive, "need not influence you now; of course, it was most kind and good of you to think of it before. But even in the past, living as we have done, we have had enough, and there-

fore you would only be filling my place ; but things are better, and it is only prudence and the fear of acting too soon which prevents papa's moving at once to a better house."

"What kind of house?" asked Meta, turning round with interest. "Did he really mean the other night that we might once again entertain our friends at Clapham, and live as we once did?"

"I think not," I replied, with the air of one who had myself formed a business connection ; "life is too short I should think for papa ever again to build up such a fortune as he lost."

"What kind of house, then," said Meta, "would he be able to take in exchange for this poor place, which I confess I am ashamed even to think about, or, if you will have it, even to address my letters to it?"

I blushed, but I did not notice the remark ; and after a moment's pause I went on to describe, in what I thought satisfactory and

glowing colours, the kind of respectable little house which I thought papa might now afford to move to, in one of the new and retired localities of Notting Hill, or Shepherd's Bush, where we had heard rents were sufficiently reasonable.

Meta looked at me, her full, rich lips curling up with a kind of easy, good-humoured contempt.

"That," she said, "is a move in the right direction, and would not be so bad an address, and I should not be forced to hide my letters until I could post them myself; but you must be dreaming, Alice, to think that it would be well to give up my present fashionable position on that account."

"I am only afraid that the more you continue to live away from home the more difficult you will find it to return to the quiet of home duties."

Meta softly played with the massive gold bracelet she wore, and said as easily as ever :

“ I shall not be more estranged than you will be in six weeks, dear. Families must break up at some time or other.”

“ But I hoped it would not be until you went to a home of your own, darling,” was my reply.

“ And what chance would there be of that here,” replied Meta, “ or in your respectable Notting Hill Square? Ah! cannot I see even now the grass growing upon its respectable pavements, and cannot I even now imagine what excitement the milkman would cause by his daily round.”

Meta laughed softly ; truly at this moment I thought her a very fine girl, and contrasting hers with my plain habiliments, felt almost dazzled with her charms.

“ You would be very happy there,” I said, almost plaintively ; “ you would indeed, and no place is dull where you are. We have missed you so much.”

“ A good miss, I should think ; you would

have had to take me down to Colney Hatch or Hanwell, if I had remained here Do not you know that temperaments like mine need the sunshine and the light. You might as easily think of keeping a butterfly in a cellar as of imprisoning me here."

"And are there no draw backs in your present life?" I asked.

She coloured and looked confused, and anxious to save her I went on—

"Of course, if your position were certain and independent, as well as suited to your taste, no one would wish you to alter it."

"It is so far independent," said Meta, easily, "as that I am earning my own bread and paying for my own clothes."

"I know it; it was a proud thing to do, Meta, but I cannot now see that it is needed. And can you do it where you are without the sacrifice of your opinions and feelings?"

"I have no opinions," she replied, easily,

"except that you are very prosy, dear. But I do think independence is very charming, and home life in a respectable Notting Hill Square very poky—if you call that having opinions."

"Notting Hill is a most pleasant neighbourhood," I said.

"It may be so; but it is not May Fair," she replied, easily.

I could not, sitting opposite her, and seeing her elegant costume, which always has such an effect upon us women, but help admiring her, and I felt powerless to lay my hand upon the sore which I knew to exist. I did not know myself in what she was wanting, except by the vague feeling that she had lost something in parting from us, which could only be restored in the shaded pathway of domestic life. Was it that the fresh bloom of modesty, which is such a treasure in woman, had been brushed away by the self assertion she had been constantly called upon

to guard herself with ; or had she learned too readily to trim her sails to every wind, and thus ceased to be so true and genuine as she ought to be. I could not find anything further to say in the way of argument, and therefore descended to entreaty.

“Mamma,” I said, “disliked your going away so much. Do come back, Meta, dear ; it would make her so happy.”

“You do not know,” she said, turning upon me, with an easy smile, which showed how little she supposed my suggestion admitted of even a doubt, “how delightful independence is to the taste—as enticing and as powerful with us as is the taste of blood to the hound, never again to be forgotten, live he ever so long.”

In spite of her easy smile there was a light in her eyes which showed that there was more hidden excitement and fever of feeling than she cared to show.

“But,” I said kindly, and scarce liking to

make the suggestion, "your life would be considered one of dependence rather than the contrary. If you take money—no matter what you may call it—it must imply a service, and, therefore, a dependence."

Meta laughed.

"So the gooddy part of the world says. But really it is not so. You have but to humour the caprices of others to master them; and if you do not succeed, what is to prevent your changing your place?"

She spoke in the insolence of her beauty, of her popularity, and her success, not thinking that there might be a dark side to the picture. And I do think that it is this spirit which as often as not — far oftener than actual need—is sending so many women, in scorn of homely ways, to seek their fortune in the world. Meta was entirely and completely estranged from such lowly duties as had ruled our lives for a year. The shade of home life she had likened to the cold dark

cellar which might imprison a butterfly. And I fear that with the loosening of these ties had broken also those of family affections.

She did not care for us as she did. From me, in my happiness, she did not care to hide her feelings, though, to the others, it would have been cruelty to display them.

Was I not also going away, and what would it matter to me? She did not seem to take into consideration the strong and natural inclination which took me away, and that I was but changing the quiet shelter of one home for another. Perhaps, indeed, my going intensified, rather than diminished, my love for those I left behind; for would not my new life rather enlarge my heart than wrap it about with the coils of selfish interest; and would not mine, therefore, rather have more than less room for such dear affections as are implied in the very mention of home and kindred. He who placed us in families meant, I think, that their charmed circle

should—while it often tries us—yet develope our virtues to their highest pitch. And, remembering this, I think it would be well if those poor dears who have to leave their families to seek their bread alone, would try, and that as soon as possible, to concentrate their affections, and thus make for themselves the sweet, harmonious, hallowed ties of home, though that home may be the home of the stranger.

Now I could see that Meta had left her home without, in this sense, finding another. She did not regard her patroness with that strong affection which would have kept her heart pure and domestic, but rather used her, ruled and humoured her at once—but much with the feeling of a woman who finds in domestic service, not a home, but a place which she can change at will.

I had said my little say and had failed, and had I been ever so clever in argument, I think I should have talked with the like result.

"I hope you have chosen well, dear," I said grievingly.

"Quite well," she answered lightly. "Of that I have no apprehensions," and she softly smoothed her exquisite silk dress, and glanced aside.

I knew she was contrasting it with my grey camlet, and making comparisons very little in my favour, but very satisfactory to herself.



CHAPTER II.

Man's greatest strength is shewn in standing still ;
The first sure symptom of a mind in health
Is rest of heart.

YOUNG.

Nor peace nor ease the heart can know,
Which, like the needle true,
Turns at the touch of joy or woe,
But, turning, trembles too.

Take then, this treacherous sense of mine
Which dooms me still to smart ;
Which pleasure can to pain refine,
To pain new pangs impart.

GREVILLE.



CHAPTER II.

META had scarcely left me, called away perhaps by her wish to place a definite ending to our conversation, before I was joined by Brice. To my mind, fevered as it was by the sense of failure, combined with a vague uncertainty of whether I had been right or no, he came like a fresh and healthy breeze.

“What! idle?” he said, “when I expected you would be too busy to speak to me.”

“Lucy insists on doing everything for me,” I said. “She will let me do nothing.”

"Lucy is very good," he answered. "She is a perfect treasure to us all. And so you are doing penance on the wall—saying 'Good-bye.' Is it so?"

"No; I have been talking with Meta. I have been begging her to come home, now that I am going away."

"Well?"

"And she will not."

"Well," he said again, as if unable still to comprehend the trouble which he saw on my face.

"I am very sorry, that is all," I answered, without an explicit explanation.

"But if she is comfortable, and getting on well, why need she return," he said.

"Only because I know they wish her to do so, so very much, and feel it like a desertion."

"They are not alone. Your sister is still with them," said Brice, who read everyone by the light of his clear charity.

"I do not think it does her good; she does

not love us half so well as she did. She is growing more and more estranged, and—”

“You are jealous,” he said, tenderly. “Come, love, acknowledge that you have been to your shadow land to fetch back a visionary trouble.”

“Perhaps it is so,” I said, smiling up, for I was glad to feel that the health of his mind was stronger than the sickness of mine.

“Yes, indeed, I think so,” he said; and here he heaved himself on to the wall by my side. “And you have a nearer trouble to contemplate. Do you remember that the day after to-morrow you will have passed out of your own keeping into mine?”

“Yes, it is very awful to think of,” I replied, “only when you are near me I do not fear it. I have such a strong sense of being at home when you are with me.”

“Have you? that is right. That is what I want so much, some one to be at home with me, and thus to make a home for me. And

yet I daresay we have much to learn of each other's ways, enough to give a strange interest to life, as I feel just now. I wonder if you will always be as good and kind to me as you are now."

"I hope so; if I do not grow to be afraid of you. Do not let me be afraid of you, Brice."

He laughed a soft and pleasant laugh of surprise.

"Afraid of me?"

"Yes, when you get full of business, as you did last winter, and feel absorbed and silent."

"You must trust me then, and know that I really have heavy things to think about; but afraid—you silly child—afraid of the man who would give his life for you."

"Would you, Brice?" I said, eagerly, for I had a strange delight in making him express the affection I had so much pride in believing in.

"You know I would, only it happens to be my more pleasing duty to live for you ; all my health, and strength, and nerve, make so much more capital for you, darling."

"Ah ! yes," I said, glancing at his strong wrists and broad chest, for I was very proud of his great strength.

"And you will remember," he said, very gently, "that you must try and remove the only anxiety you cause me. You are such a fragile little thing ; you will try and eat more and take plenty of exercise on foot, until I can afford to give you back your horse again."

"My horse, Brice ? Oh ! we are getting mighty fine ; that will be a very long time hence."

"Perhaps , but part of the absorbed attention to business which you seem to condemn last winter arose from my fear that your health was failing for want of the comforts

which were once as your daily bread, and therefore I renewed my hardest struggles to obtain them for you."

"Forgetting," I said, taking his strong hand in mine, "that you were then, as now, my greatest of all comforts, and not my selfish comfort altogether, for have I not given to my parents a son, whom they love as if, indeed, he were their very own. And was I then, indeed, part of your life? I am not worthy of this love."

"Make it, darling," he answered, "some compensation in the time future, for the ills which must come to us, and never do me the injustice to disbelieve in it. To me it is sometimes an astonishment to think that amidst the great concerns which claim my interest such a small thing as you should have so much importance as almost to rule my destiny."

"Is it so?" I answered, my cheeks flushing up with pride and pleasure. "Then I will

hold your love a sacred treasure, ever to be trusted and revered."

"Not even to be doubted when I cease to tell you of it," he said, with an incredulous smile. "Will you in the future take that for granted of which now you require so many assertions?"

I hung my head, conscious of deserving his censure; then I flung it back with a light laugh.

"I will try not to love you so much," I said, "and then I shall never be jealous."

I expected, of course, an eager contradiction, but instead of this Brice answered readily and with some solemnity, as he held my hand altogether enclosed in his strong palm—

"That is the true secret—Heaven first and our poor earthly love second. Then will the last gain strength from the first."

How often I remembered those words in the days that were to come. How often they

proved to me a staff to lean upon, when my aching heart was bruised and breaking. How many times did I find strength in them when my poor earthly love, as he had called it, was but a thorn in my bosom, the more painful the more it was leaned upon.

But now there was no shade of distrust in my eyes which looked at him, nor in my heart which drew in his affection, with full and ample satisfaction, and presently when we descended from our perch upon the wall and I led the way down the narrow path, through the pea sticks, and took him into tea, it was with the certain feeling that I was carrying in with me not my treasure only, but theirs; not my lover only, but the dear son and brother in whom they all confided, as if he had been firm and strong as adamant.

I linger in thought over this happy time. He had had power to chase my temporary dissatisfaction with Meta, and bring me out into the sunshine, for it must be allowed as

one of those curious phenomena which mark many-sided human nature, that those tempers which seem as a rule to have so much elasticity and which are bright, as having the faculty, as it were, of catching the least light from the circumstances around them, sparkling in the sunshine with many hues like the prism, being, as Shakespeare would describe, 'finely touched,' have an answering and an almost inexplicable power of suffering the most exquisite pain from causes which can scarcely be discerned by more even and phlegmatic minds.

To me Brice's very blindness or his great difficulty in seeing my troubles brought health greater, I think, than any amount of sympathy would have done, and I felt with glowing confidence, as I took my seat by his side at our evening meal, that we were entirely suited to each other. I perhaps gave his mind a finer tone, but he gave me what I most needed—mental health. Under the in-

fluence of his presence I could afford to forget my dear sister's shortcomings and see only all that there was to admire in her; and as for the others, how I loved them. That night perhaps the feeling so strong within me shone out in my face, or made itself heard in the tones of my voice; I only know that I felt myself drawn very close to them, and that then I felt more than ever the value of their affection, which I had always so keenly appreciated, and yet before two more suns had set I was to go from them never perhaps to return altogether the same. I was to throw in my lot with another, to accept a life in which they might sympathize, but in which they would not share. Elsewhere would lie my duties, elsewhere perhaps, and entirely unconnected with their influence, my joys and my sorrows; and yet I am sure that I loved them I think at least twice as dearly as ever I had done before, now that we were about to part.

Already I began to see in clearer perspective the strength of their unfailing affection, so tried and so true ; their sympathy so untiring, their vigilance for my happiness so unsleeping ; and yet I was going from them, drawn by a stronger tie and urged by a deeper love. Would it be so faithful as theirs ? It would—it would ; how could I doubt it ?



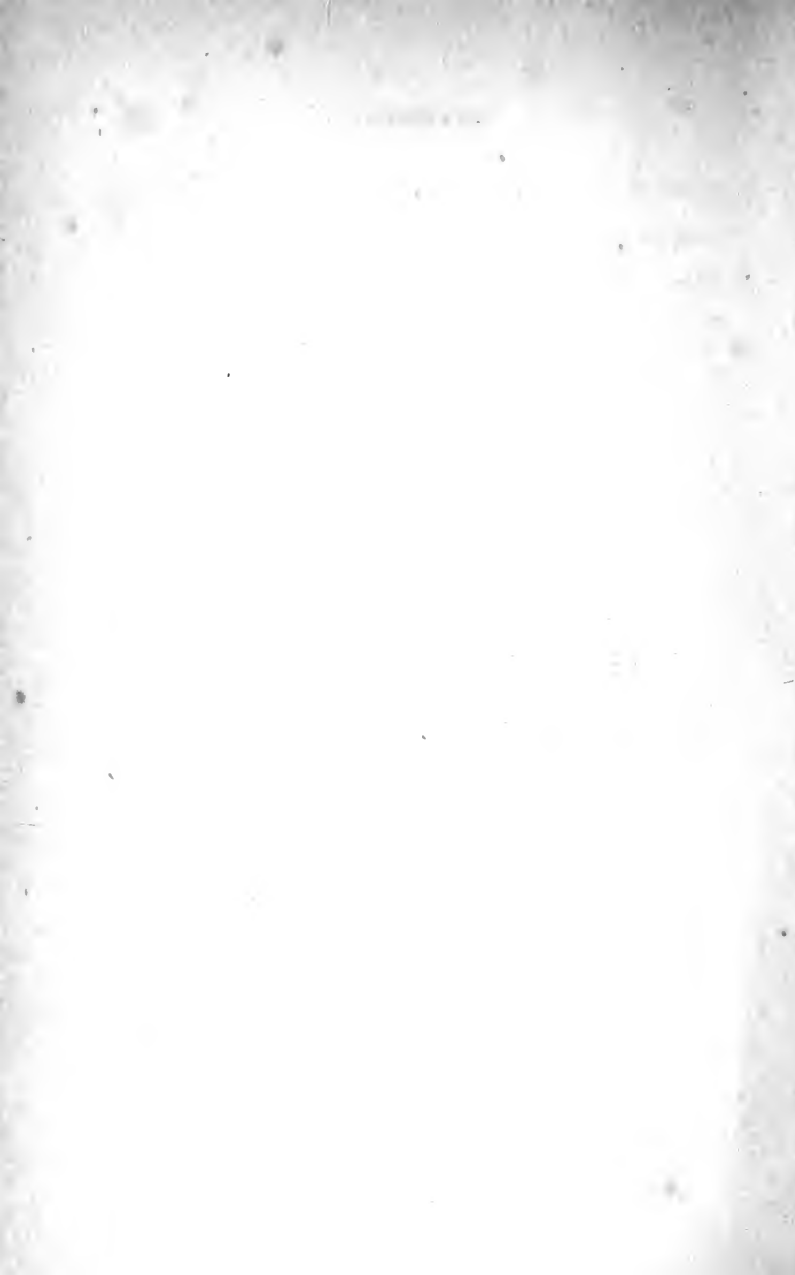
CHAPTER III.

Glide gently, thus for ever glide,
O Thames ! that other Bards may see
As lovely visions by thy side
As now, fair river ! come to me.
O glide, fair stream ! for ever so,
Thy quiet soul on all bestowing,
Till all our minds for ever flow,
As thy deep waters now are flowing.

WORDSWORTH.

Among those joys, 'tis one at eve to sail
On the broad river with a favouring gale.

CRABBE.



CHAPTER III.

"I WILL not see you to-morrow, Brice," I said to him, as I went with him to the gate to say good night, and to watch him on his way, "to-morrow belongs entirely to the dear ones I am leaving."

"And all your future life to me," he said, with a little triumph in his manner, which very seldom shewed itself, "even if I am taken from you I shall yet influence all your earthly future."

"Be it so, the influence will only be for

good, I am sure, I am content to give it up to you; but to-morrow let me keep for them."

And so we wished each other good night, and as I watched his receding form amidst the shadows, I lent my hands upon the gate, for my head was swimming with happiness and with sweet fancies—dizzy with piling one upon the other airy castles in the air—castles in which Brice and I were always the prince and princess of course. My heart was full of romance—full too, I fear, of the presumption which forms so great a part of the warm energy of youth. I had sometimes paused to think in the midst of our short and happy courtship, whether my lover would make a good husband; but never—I think never once did I doubt the certainty of my making a good wife. I had been a good daughter, so my loving parents told me, and my sisters loved me well, and had praised and petted me always. Surely I should make a good wife. I relied upon myself as no

mortal should, for my intentions were of the very best; but I had forgotten that the smoothest stream must somewhere meet with stones and brambles, and I fear I was not prepared for them.

In parting from my lover for one day, however, I had meant not only to give the few remaining hours to my friends, but to spend them in seeking repentance for the past, as well as preparation for the future; but I found little time for either—last days are fortunately busy ones, or perhaps my spirits would have broken down, and in the hurry of seeing to the many things which precede alike a journey and a feast, a wedding season, is, I found, very little favourable to thought and reflection.

Not that my wedding was anything more than the very simplest possible; we were to have our plain breakfast first, and leave from the church, and Brice was to bring one friend; aunt Bona had promised to come and

spend the day, and that was all; still it bore the resemblance of a little feast, and the smallest necessity for preparation where there are no efficient servants, always makes a great deal to do, the more so as the work is so often done by unaccustomed hands.

I should have liked to have strolled into the church, and to have been married, as it were, by accident, but mamma wished to make our little marriage party as much a ceremonial as our altered circumstances permitted, perhaps thinking thereby to set a firmer seal upon the sacred engagement we were about to enter upon.

I need not dwell upon that ceremonial, I could not if I would, I do not know myself at this time; even memory which can sometimes so surely unravel in the past, what seems so misty in the present, fails me here; I forget entirely the impression which I received of myself in the glass, whether I was satisfied with myself or not. I cannot recall how I

said good bye to the dear ones I was leaving, and though some few incidents live in my mind, still they are of the most immaterial kind and scarcely interest even myself. All seems hazy in my recollection, and if not so, hurried and like the changing phantasmagoria of a dream. I find myself again in the cottage at Hampton, where it had pleased us to spend our honeymoon, not being able to afford a more extended tour. Our wedding is over—our wedding which had formed so frequent a topic of conversation for the last month, and we are married. The romance of life has reached its summit, the three-volumed novel is ended, and what do we think of it?

What does Brice think of it?—that is what puzzles me; is he quite happy in this his wife? is she as fascinating now when thrown into daily converse with him, as when he saw her in the holiday part of the day? Will he

be tempted to recall the saying of the Frenchman, who being asked why he did not marry a certain lady to whom he seemed so much attached, replied "Where then shall I spend my evenings?" I had fascinated Brice coming to spend his evenings with me, could I do so now so as to make his home lovely and sweet to him? I must try, but how? I sat thinking of this as I let the tea brew at my humble breakfast table, waiting for Brice's returning step. The place and scene are rather unfavourable for the trial. It is true I am a young bride, reigning over the first warm love of my new husband, but a country lodging must, I think, now, be a trial even to an old married couple; and to us, who have as yet we find everything to learn in the way of acquaintance, who have nothing but our love to trade upon. Nothing but love! my young friends may say in surprise, nothing but love, which can smooth all difficul-

ties, rub off the rough edges of all differences, and make us put up with the most dreadful things.

True, but there were no dreadful things to put up with, only to sit, or walk, or lounge; nothing in the world to do but to love each other all the time. And then how few of us, until we lose it, know the full blessing of that life we lead with our brothers and sisters—we are so at home with them—even if they do sometimes prove refractory and say spiteful things to us, yet we are not nervous in their company—we feel no restraint, we may talk or be silent, pleased or absent, we are at home with them—that is all, but enough to be very different to the feeling we have in any other society. That strong feeling of daily use and companionship, if people would but see it and wait for it, must in the end form the strongest tie between man and wife, and the great element of happiness in the new home which they have set up

together, and is the more valuable to them because the very act of marriage has as it were destroyed it for them with all others. The best and dearest of mothers must in future be received as company, and you must be as jealous of your attentions to her as if they were to be measured, not by the love you bear her, but by the ceremonies of the world; so that in fact you have cut off from yourself—your intimacies, your old world indeed, and when passing out from the church upon your wedding day, have entered upon a new. I think, whether expressed or no, some such difficulty awaits every new man and wife, for it is so usual to find women saying—"I would not go through the first part of my wedded life for anything." They, perhaps, far more than men, miss the intimacies of home which they have never been without. While, perhaps, upon the other side, men may feel the restraints of home to which perhaps for many years they have been unaccustomed.

I had time to carry out my reflections, which rather at that time partook of speculation, than as now of retrospect, for Brice was healthy in body as he was healthy in mind, and a morning walk by the river seemed the most natural thing in the world for him to take, while I was braiding my hair with such elaborate care; lest he might find a flaw in the thing he had purchased with so much love.

He came in, his face glowing with exercise and health, and most unromantically hungry. He looked as if he could have eaten a whole pigeon pie, but there was nothing on the table but bread and butter, and I felt a sudden twinge of conscience.

"What is the matter, little one," he said, quick to observe the passing cloud upon my face, "are the mysteries of your teapot too much for you, or have I kept you waiting until the tea is cold?"

"No, Brice; I am too glad if you enjoyed

your walk, but I was thinking how hungry you must be."

"Well, and so I am," he said, cheerfully, "and if you were also it would be a comfort," and here he began to cut some delicate slices of bread and butter, which my short experience already told me were intended for me. "Does my appetite annoy you, dear," he went on.

"Oh! no, no; but I was thinking you wanted a slice or two of ham or pie, or something."

"Well, dear," he said, still puzzled.

"If you had not married me, Brice, you could have had a better breakfast."

He laid down the bread, and looked at me with sudden alarm.

"Did you," he said, hurriedly, "have a better at the cottage?"

"Oh! no; we were too thankful to have enough of that, but you—you have had your bachelor meals, and—"

“If that is all,” he said, helping himself to a substantial piece of bread, which might have effectually removed my fears for his strength.

“Yes, but Brice, you have always had meat for breakfast.”

He blushed like one detected.

“Do you think,” he said, looking at me as if I were a very choice morsel indeed, “I could prefer a meat breakfast to my little wife?”

“You have been very good to me,” I said, humbly.

He laughed, it was a little good-natured laugh of love and triumph; it must have warmed his heart to feel how satisfied his wife was with him.

“I thought,” he said, “my bones were to stick out of my skin before you bated an inch of your economies.”

It was true that I had said so, that I had really used the expression without shuddering;

may, with coolness and resolution. I blushed that rosy red which he liked to see flushing over my pale impressionable face, in which my flatterers had told me my feelings shewed themselves like the reflections on a transparent lake. With his words there burst upon me a knowledge that I had not before detected. I had loved him well, but never as I loved him now. See his bones stick through the skin, that would now be an impossibility. I almost trembled, and a kind of fear stole over me, at the great love for him which was drawing him into my very life, that life which he had truly said he should from henceforth influence unto the end.

Brice laughed softly, and began to drink his tea and eat his bread and butter with great contentment. I felt as if I should like to run out of the room and get away from the influence which bewitched all my common sense away from me, only that it was so very

pleasant to be where he was. Had he read me, I wonder, in those few moments as I had read myself ; why else did he look so very satisfied and vain, which was certainly unlike Brice.

“ I have enquired the price of the boats,” he said, “ and I think we can afford a nice long row on the river.”

“ Can you really afford it ?” I said, delighted as a child who for a long time has been denied any pleasant amusement.

“ I think I can,” he said, teasingly, “ but if we went into debt a little, you know it is our honeymoon.”

“ No, indeed,” I said, earnestly, “ however we end, we will at least begin well.”

Poverty being a new thing to me, I had all along found a certain amusement in it, much as rich people find in the hardships of deer stalking or the roughing it in a new country, and I took a pride in managing it well.

“ We will walk by the river and that will

cost nothing," I said. "I cannot have you go into debt to please me."

"I was but jesting," he answered, "I can well afford to spend all the little money I have brought here."

So we went upon the river. I, seated at one end of the smallest boat we could procure which could hold two, he pulling easily up the river with those strong arms, which seemed so little sensitive to fatigue. His saying that he could quite afford it had made me feel so easy.

"I hope," he said, when I noticed on this, "that the economies we are forced to use will not make us grow mean."

"I hope not too," I said, "I cannot imagine you mean, but after all I think it is the spendthrifts who have never anything to spare for their neighbours."

"Then we will set out on a different plan," said Brice, "and sparing for ourselves will practise spending for others. You judge me

wrongly, I have been forced to spare myself so much, that sparing has grown a habit, but it must be counteracted. You would never take me with you into your shadow-land and love me there if you thought me a stingy wretch."

"I cannot fancy that."

"It is true, I spend with difficulty, but that is a fault we will carefully correct—you and I."

"It will be a new thing if I am to help you to be good," I said.

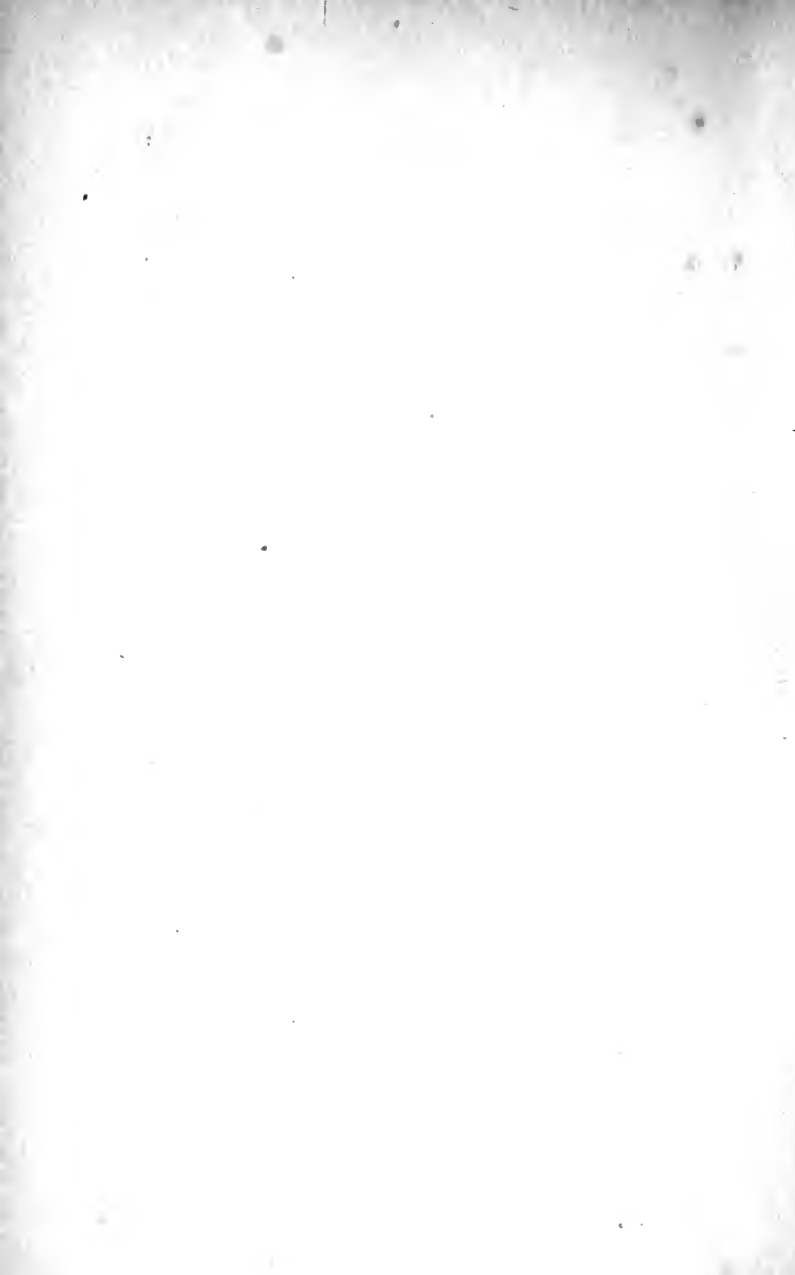
"I thought you were to be my severest monitor," returned Brice. "I have not forgotten about the bones, you see, to which I am to be reduced, and am most anxious to deprecate your displeasure before it begins to be exercised."

It was very pleasant upon the river, and out there it was like being lovers again, who might possibly have to go their several ways

when the row was over, although we were a little playing company with each other still. At least I was, for I felt a great fear in my heart lest Brice should be disappointed in his honeymoon, but I did not perceive any feeling of the kind in Brice, though he might have had it and concealed it as well, as I daresay I did.

We watched the other boats we passed upon the river, or noted the reflection of the passing landscape, or looked out to see if any fish sprang after the flies that danced upon the stream, and felt as idle as the scene of beauty through which we passed. A river to me is always a delight; sorry or glad, I can yet find a sympathy in it, the continual passing on of its water, passing on like our lives, brings a river very close to our affections, and like our lives there is always a sense of mystery in it, always going on whether the day be bright or cloudy, pausing

for no storm, and never loitering be the sunshine ever so golden. Still on—on—on, like our lives to the very end. That is why, perhaps, I always so love a river, and look upon it as a living, wakeful, sympathizing thing.



CHAPTER IV.

Pass thou on ! for the vow is said
That may ne'er be broken ;
The trembling hand hath a blessing laid
On snow forehead and auburn braid,
And the word is spoken,
By lips that never then word betray'd

Pass thou on ! for thy human all
Is richly given,
And the voice that claims its holy thrall
Must be sweeter for life than music's fall
And, this side heaven,
Thy lip may never its trust recall.

WILLIS.



CHAPTER IV.

WE returned to our homely lodgings to find that there was nothing particular to be done. Now Brice will be tired of this, I thought within myself anxiously, and, tiring of this, will tire of me.

"I think," said Brice, aloud and sympathizing with me, who knows? "while you take your bonnet off I will go and see if I can get a paper."

"Pray do," I replied; but I thought, "poor fellow, he is tiring already of this solitude with only me to fill it," and I retired to get

ready for our mutton chops—our housekeeping at this early period did not reach much further—feeling a little dejected and apprehensive for the future. “How if he is tired in the first warmth of his love, will he endure a life?” I said to myself, as I seated myself before my mirror, and tried to train my hair into a new fashion to catch my lover’s eyes, for I clung to the thought of my lover, my adorer, and did not care that he should too soon subside into the husband. I fell into such a fit of musing that I was much longer than I had intended to be, and, looking at my watch, I found that I had^h been absent an unreasonable length of time. It was true that it would cost but two or three strides up the short stairs to reach me, and now Brice was privileged to seek me, even at my toilet; but still it was too long to leave him. I hastened down to find that he had not returned, and to be in time to see him coming up to the house with that leisurely and collected air which

seemed to forbid all question, and which reminded me at once of the absorbed man of business.

But he was mine now—if not my lover still better, my husband, and he must not be absorbed and shut me out. I went to meet him.

In an instant as he saw me at the door his countenance changed, glowing all over with that light of affection which was to me better than any words. Perhaps for a few minutes he had forgotten me, and gone back to business calculations, for he looked as if I came upon him like a glad surprise.

We went in together, and eat our dinner in supreme content.

“I had to go further for the paper than I thought,” he exclaimed; “and then the money article set me thinking.”

“I too have a money article to bring before you,” I said, when presently we were seated at the window, looking out upon the monthly

roses and honeysuckle which adorned the porch, and feeling not a bit like company, particularly as Brice had protectingly advised me to lay my head upon his shoulder by way of rest, never noticing how it would spoil my new coiffure, which I do not think he had observed; and since he had not observed it, I did not think it so well worth preserving, and so did as I was bid.

“Well, for your money article, then,” he said, smiling, not shrinking as men who misuse money always do at the bare mention of the word.

“How shall we manage about our house-keeping?” I asked, trembling a little.

“How? why you will manage that, will you not?”

“Yes, but the money, Brice; you will tell me what to spend.”

“Yes, dear, of course.”

I think though he had smiled, he liked the roses, and the honeysuckles, and his wife

better than the dry subject I had introduced ; but he roused himself when he felt that I was really and deeply interested. He had known my father's income well, and therefore he had no false shame in answering,

"I think we may spend, without embarrassment, two hundred a year, and I should like to give you the entire management of that sum, which must cover all we spend. By all I mean rent, taxes, food, clothes and journeys. If I am to make our fortune, I can give my wife no more now."

"It will be enough," I said, contentedly. "We shall be rich," and then I added, with a sigh, "we had not nearly so much at the cottage."

"But they have now," he answered. "Your father and I take equal shares, and in working for myself, I work for him. I cannot grow better off without his doing so, and therefore the more you keep me from domestic

embarrassment, the more you will free me and serve him."

"I will try," I said.

"But do you really mind," he answered, taking the whole responsibility of the expenditure? Shall I give you fifty pounds a quarter, or would you prefer my paying the larger sums and giving you so much a week."

"I would rather have it by the quarter, Brice, if you are sure my doing so takes any trouble off your hands."

"It certainly does; and remember you may do anything in the world but go into debt. You may spend the money just as you like, and that you will to the best of your judgment do it well, I feel assured. You may make mistakes—that we must expect. Your housekeeping may be extravagant one week and illiberal the next at first; but all these mistakes will remedy themselves in time. This is the way by which I purpose

to correct myself of a foolish habit I have of looking so closely after the shillings, and by putting away from myself those small annoyances, I hope to give a clearer head to the furtherance of our general welfare."

"And your pocket money, Brice—your omnibuses, your luncheons?"

"Must I think come out of the money," he returned. "I can afford to spend no more."

This mention of his own expenses clouded him a little.

"Should we not have gone nearer the city?" I said.

"No, I think not. I require a great deal of exercise, and as a rule, I should certainly walk. I like Kensington. It is not so business-like, and it would be pleasant to me to think that you were in the freshest air I can get for you."

"Will my fifty pounds be ready money?" I asked, "and when shall I have it?"

"The day after our return home. You will

see that the first fifty is the largest sum you will receive, for as we have not been in occupation, you will have no taxes, and, therefore you must make your calculations accordingly."

"You will advise me sometimes?" I asked. It seemed necessary to me that he should sympathize with me in everything.

"Yes, of course, if you really need it; but I shall be glad to be spared the necessity. I wish to see the machinery in motion without being called upon to examine the wheels or test the screws. I shall really be glad to know nothing about it."

I was a little disappointed at this. I thought Brice should be ready to enter into everything which occupied me, not remembering how little I should really have liked the kind of man who would be capable of doing so.

"Now, love," he said, "may we not look at the honeysuckles, and forget money matters?"

I saw then that he meant what he said, and that he really wished to have nothing to do with the accounts, and that if I really meant to please him I must depend upon myself. I resolved therefore to do so, and teased him no more that night. Indeed, having settled my little money article, without too many words, I resolved to give myself up to the freedom of our few remaining days of holiday during which Brice paid, and we kept no account of our modest expenditure.

This week did wonders for us: it was impossible for us not to reach a degree of intimacy which in other circumstances, perhaps, would have been longer of attainment. The very fact of our having only one dressing-glass seemed to place us on a more familiar footing. As, too, we spent a great deal of time out of doors, either walking, or upon the river, there was not so much leisure for mutual entertainment left upon our hands. Perhaps something of this first induced newly

married couples to take to the wandering habits now in fashion, but which seem to have been unknown in the days of Sir Charles Grandison.

Our increasing civilisation and supposed refinement may have rendered our minds more sensible to the difficulty of becoming thoroughly at ease in each other's society all at once, and some such roughing may be necessary to make us fit into each other's ways—as people say a picnic brings acquaintance together, who would never really know each other in more ceremonious society. However that may be, and though time is reported to fly on the wings of love, yet the one week we spent at Hampton stands out in my remembrance as if it had been a year, and had comprised within it the experience of half a lifetime.

At last the time came when Brice could say regretfully :

“How strange it seems to think that our

holiday is over, and that we go home to-night! Are you very sorry?"

"No," I answered, truthfully; "I would rather go before you are tired of your idleness, and I long to see my new home."

"But then," he said, a little reproachfully, "you forget that I shall be absent from you all day."

"I know," I answered; "but we shall have our evenings."

"You long to get rid of me in the day, then?" he said, with a little jealousy in his tone which made my heart leap with gladness.

"Ah! Brice," I said, letting him look into the very depths of my thoughts, "it is only that I am a miser, and that I dare not keep my gold always in my sight, lest I should exhaust it—I must hide it sometimes to keep it safely."

"Tell me, little wife," he said, impetuously, and somehow impetuosity well became my

calm and usually self-contained lover, breaking out as it did with twice the force of more easily excited and effervescent minds. "Do you love me to-day as you loved me when you came here a week ago?"

I bent my face, made heavy with blushes, trying to hide it from his sight, for his eyes were flashing with the thoughts that kindled in his mind.

"Tell me," he said, excited, but determined; "so much of all our future life depends upon your answer."

"Ten thousand times better!" I murmured. "Oh! Brice; my only fear is that I love you too well—that you may stand between me and Heaven!"

"That must never be with either of us," he answered, in a voice broken with hidden emotion; "but you do not repent that you have taken me for better for worse! Look in my face and tell me so!"

I looked and faltered something, the result

of which was that he dropped my hands and drew me within his strong embrace as glad and happy a woman as ever felt proud of her new wedding ring.

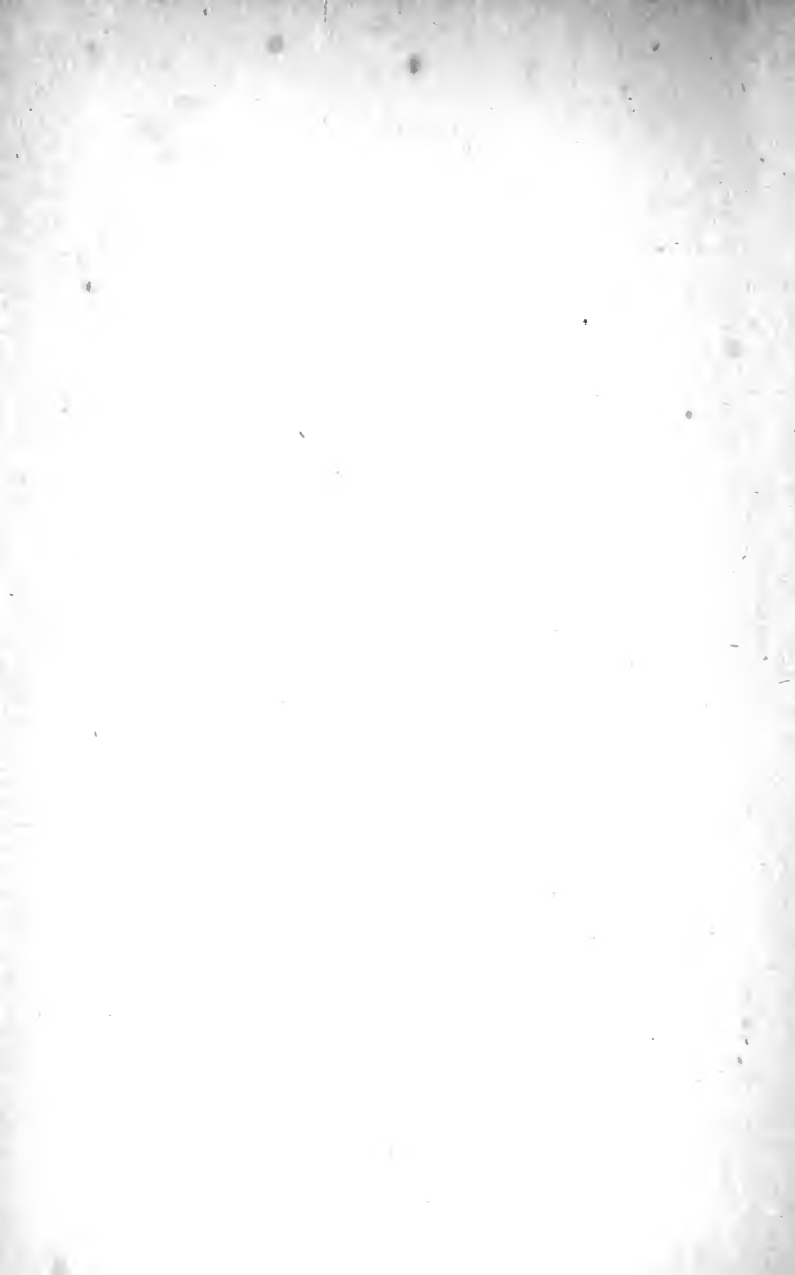
That evening we said good-bye to the neat little lodging where we had spent our short honeymoon, and returned to London.



CHAPTER V.

Sail forth into the sea of life,
O gentle, loving, trusting wife,
And safe from all adversity
Upon the bosom of that sea
Thy comings and thy goings be !
For gentleness and love and trust
Prevail o'er angry wave and gust ;
And in the wreck of noble lives
Something immortal still survives !

LONGFELLOW.



CHAPTER V.

THE house which Brice had chosen for our home was situated in old Kensington, and a little way from the main road: it was just that tiny little house, covered with ivy, which would tempt any poor man who happened to be in love to get married at once. It was very small, but it happened—perhaps because it was well built and in good preservation—to be left standing when larger houses were erected about it. The larger houses shut it in and tried to eclipse it altogether; and yet I think anyone going along that road would

have passed them over and carried away with him a remembrance of the little cottage, shut within its tiny garden, and looking so old-fashioned and retired. Brice had spied it out in his walks, and, as he afterwards confessed, had kept it on his hands six months before he actually wanted it. Why, when ground is so valuable, this house was left standing I never quite understood; but I fancy the place was in Chancery, and that no one had a right to deal with the property, beyond letting it remain as it was, and keeping it in repair. We paid thirty pounds a year for this house.

The consequence of Brice's having had it so long was that it was not furnished in any common ordinary manner, and nothing had been put in without elaborate care. It had evidently been the amusement of his idle hours to choose things for his house, and all his spare money must have been carefully husbanded for the purpose, for every article

was firm, and strong, and good, as well as in good taste. The rooms were very small, but they were doubled by the mirrors which were so carefully placed; and the effect of this careful arrangement of every nook and corner was to give the idea of the home people used to marry into and remain in before they fell into the fashion of constant migration, using their houses rather as lodgings than domiciles, endeared by the remembrance of the many blessings which, if we will but recognise them, fall into most lives. This was a surprise for me, who had stipulated for so very little. I was thoroughly delighted.—I was in raptures. To have come here from our Clapham Mansion would have contented me with Brice by my side; but from the poor cottage where we had lately been so contented to live, it seemed a dwelling fit for a fairy. There was, too, a spare room, ready furnished, and Brice as he stood

at the door where he had taken me in my impatience to see everything, said :

“I should not have liked to have given you a home from which it would have been necessary to exclude your sisters, but it will depend upon your housekeeping whether you can afford to receive them.”

I thanked him warmly for this kindness as for all others; but I think he needed little more than the delight which shewed itself in my face, and which seemed to tingle to my very finger's ends.

“Can it really be then,” I said, as I threw myself in his willing arms, “that all my trials are over? I shall be so happy—I think I shall never know what sorrow means here.”

“You shall not if I can help it,” he answered, tenderly; “and yet I fear my little wife may find her share.”

“I will not see troubles—I will remember

how kind you have been to make such a nice home for me ; every piece of furniture about the house shall only remind me of your love when you are absent."

"You should need no reminder," said my husband, bending down his head to reach the small wife he held with that strong arm of his, from which, however, I soon escaped again, as restless as I have seen a butterfly on a summer day, which amidst so much that is tempting can settle nowhere for any length of time. I was eager to examine everything, to feel the soft texture of my muslin curtains, and to fall into raptures of delight over my little drawing-room—which, small as it was, was so tastefully furnished that I should not have shrunk from receiving in it the finest of my old friends. But I think what pleased me as much as anything, was some empty glass shades which Brice pointed out as being intended for me to fill with wax flowers. He remembered then my little art of which in

my palmy days I had been so proud. He appreciated instead of despising it, and wished his house to show the handiwork of his wife's fingers. That little allusion seemed at once to show me that he had no wish or pleasure in seeing me turn into a household drudge, but that he would rather I should keep up the little refinements to which my early life had been accustomed, be, in fact, the refining element of his home.

I thought in my own mind that he did not know how expensive these fancy things were, but I did not express my thoughts, for it would be so damping to him, and so determined to try and buy materials by degrees, so as to keep myself employed in pretty work to please him and make all about him seem ornamental, as well as useful, which I could well understand would be tempting to him after a long matter of fact day in the city. I found that the thoughts of my new house and the duties opening before me, were quite

sufficient to occupy me this first evening, and indeed had nothing more been added to the simple fact of our return to home and civilised life, it would have been sufficient that we had been from it together to make us at ease in each other's society.

The next morning roused us to a more real and actual existence than ours had been for the last week. Brice's short holiday was over and he could afford to steal no more time from his duties in the city. He was to leave me that day. I cannot help thinking that he was very glad it was his duty to go. He liked his work, nothing much better, he delighted in the calculations, risks, ventures and savings of business. It was the game he had learned to play with all his interest wide awake in it, and I am inclined to think that he played his game all the better because he was happy.

"You will not be dull, dear, till I come back," he said, as he went out, feeling very

possibly a little in the wrong for being so glad to get to his work.

“Do not be so vain, Brice,” I answered, “as if I could not live without you for a few hours. I shall be so busy unpacking that I shall not even have leisure to remember you.”

He smiled a bright relieved smile.

“I shall do my work all the better,” he answered, “that I have a wife at home to work for.”

Then he kissed me, and was gone. In spite of my protestations, directly he had vanished I felt a fear of my own loneliness, and I am ashamed to confess it, a still greater fear of the servant who would come, when I should summon courage to ring the bell. I began thinking what she thought of her new mistress. She had looked kindly at me the night before, but it would be such a long time before we should have any confidence in each other.

I sat over the breakfast things meditating upon this new difficulty which I had not before contemplated, feeling that directly we came to speak to each other on the great subject of the day's orders she would find out my ignorance. Neither the lavish house-keeping of our Clapham home, nor the close and strained economies of our later dwelling would exactly suit as a model for my management. How far would two hundred a year go I wonder. It was very important that I should start well, neither meanly nor extravagantly, either extreme being alike reprehensible, but how should I find out the exact and proper method. Then in my house I must be neither idle nor fussy, how should I find in this the happy medium. I began to see that I had taken upon me very serious duties indeed; that as a married woman I was called upon to take a more definite action in the world than had belonged to me as a girl, and that I had laid upon me

much heavier responsibilities than I had contemplated when all the range of my future seemed comprised in the simple fact of loving Brice. I had far more to do. I was not a wife only but the mistress of a house, and I think my former life had taught me little more than this, which after all was, I think, one of the most serviceable things it could teach, an easy habit of command and at the same time such an expectation of obedience as prevented my being suspicious of the intentions of others, or descending into any thing like a mean watchfulness of their actions.

My poverty had however taught me something even more worth learning, namely that human nature differs very little in itself, however much the circumstances by which it is surrounded may do so. To understand this fully is to hold a key to human hearts which nothing else can give so well. Lady Mary Wortly Montague, in her clear wit, says, with a certain degree of sarcasm when speaking of

courts and kings, "I have been all over the world but I have never found anything but men and women." And in like manner, bearing her words in mind, I have found the truth of them, not in courts, for of them I know nothing personally, and simply accept her keen witted evidence of the fact, but in my kitchen, and my nursery, and in all my dealings with those whom Providence has placed in still more humble circumstances than my own.

I feel certain that many of the social mistakes we make, are grounded upon the misapprehension of this truth. We wound each other, forgetting that others are as susceptible to pain as ourselves, and we fail to please, because we fail to sympathize and feel. We like our own privacy respected, we often feel that the perpetual intrusion of the most agreeable people may become a burden and a restraint, and yet there are some who have no respect for the privacy of those who

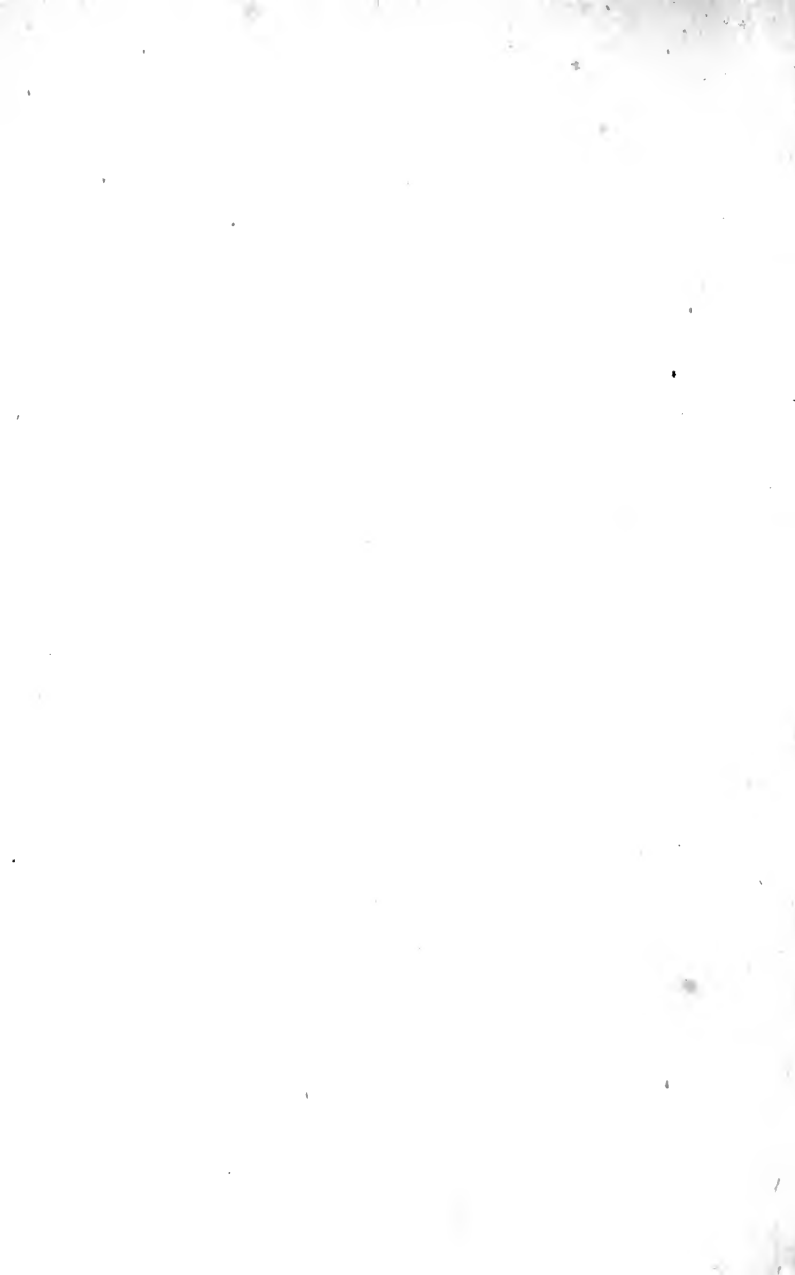
have come upon an agreement of mutual service to reside beneath their roof.

The good woman of the proverbs when she rose up a great while before it was day, must, I fancy, have been very careful to have carried with her a sympathizing and cheerful household. In making them work for her she must, I think, have made it quite clear that their interests were identical with hers, their needs and wants the same, and as well known to her, as shown by the fact of their being all alike guarded in comfort from the cold of winter. All her household was clothed with scarlet we hear. This simple sentence shows alike her sympathy with them and her pride in their appearance. Depend upon it half her wealth lay in the fact that they worked as willingly with their hands as she did.

CHAPTER VI.

Yes ! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
These simple blessings of the lowly train ;
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm than all the gloss of art :
Spontaneous joys, where nature has its play,
The soul adopts, and owns their first-born sway ;
Lightly they frolic o'er the vacant mind,
Unenvied, unmolested, unconfined.

GOLDSMITH.



CHAPTER VI.

I SAW my duties clearly enough, though it was more difficult to perceive how to accomplish them, but I found then as I have often found since, that straightforward simplicity often saves a world of perplexity. Trembling a little, but determined, I rang the bell at last, and at a due interval, which as it was prolonged, made my heart beat faster and faster, my new maid entered the room. I have commented on my own diminutive height, which I had yet learned to manage with a certain dignity. In contrast to myself, Ann

was of more than full height and largely made, with prominent and irregular features, which had something hard and determined in them, only that they were contradicted by the kindly cheerfulness of the eyes.

She had on a neat morning gown and a clean coarse apron, and I was very satisfied with her appearance.

“Did you ring?” she asked. I had rung, but was still sorely at a loss for words; I perceived that she was a woman of strong mind and hard to win, but when won she might serve my purpose well.

“Yes, I did, for you to clear away,” I said cheerfully, summoning my courage at last “and we must talk about the dinner; I do not quite like to go out and order it myself yet, so I think you must just go to-day.”

“And what shall I get, ma’m?—a nice fowl now.”

I knew enough of housekeeping at home to be sure that poultry was dearer than

butcher's meat, but I thought I could afford the extravagance to-day; it would make a little feast for Brice, and at the same time it would show Ann that I thought her choice worth having.

"That would be very nice," I said, "with a little bacon and some bread sauce—it will be quite a treat after the chops we have had all the week; your master told me you were a good cook, and you will get all you want," and I gave her some money from my purse; "but, Ann, you know we must be very economical, and you and I must study how we can be comfortable and nice without spending more than we can afford; I do not want to pinch in the wrong place, and I am sure you will help me to try and be a good housekeeper. Now if you will be kind enough to go at once; I hope no one will come so early to force me to go to the door while you are out."

Ann took the money and her basket and

the latch key, and with a promise to be back soon, departed, leaving me in doubt as to how much she had understood of what I had—rather wished to say, than really said.

“Enough for to-day, however,” I said to myself, “to-day she shall show off her cooking, and to-morrow we shall have both a greater respect for each other.”

She had left the breakfast things on the table at my desire; I rose now and packed them carefully upon the tray which she had brought with her, and removed them to the slab in the entrance passage, and then spent my time in wandering about my little room, and arranging it to my taste. The dear home which Brice had given me called for all my care. I had not yet seen my kitchen, and I was sorely tempted to run down and look at it all by myself; and was it not my own? but fortunately I paused at the very head of the kitchen stairs, and remembered how little, if I were a servant, I should thus

like to have my whereabouts pried into while I was out of the way, and I returned to the parlour and waited there until Ann returned. I saw by her face, and by the glance she cast towards the tray, that she was gratified with this little act, which showed that I wished to help without interfering with her; I do not think the look would have been pleased at all if I had carried them down into her especial dominion.

“I will come down with you,” I said when she stepped in to display her basket, “and you shall show me your kitchen.”

There was a great act of magnanimity as I considered it; I had passed over to her a place in which it would have been my delight to interfere, being tempted to fancy that I might do my duty there in a hundred ways; might I not have learned to wash and starch my own laces, to make wonderfully economical pies and puddings. I gave a little sigh to the thought—a sigh of regret; but if my

household was to go on cheerfully, I knew well that I must be a mistress indeed, but not a bore.

I tried to be cordial—I praised the fowl and appreciated the bacon, and then turned to look at my kitchen. It was dark, and the fire in the grate was pinched; and there was rather a bareness about the furniture. Brice had not given his attention here it was plain; compared with the rest of the house, which was so amply and comfortably furnished, this part seemed to me wretched. It was the reverse of the picture, and seemed at once to tell of the economies which were necessary in our establishment. I could not help looking round me with a feeling of blank disappointment. But I suppressed the feeling; it would not do to seem to disapprove of anything the master had done, for probably he had scarcely ever entered the kitchen, and only ordered what he was asked for; and Ann made no complaint. But I was glad to

get up again to my light and pleasant sitting room, and there I sat down to think. I was no longer the young girl I had been on that pleasant birthday when Brice had sent me the white rose-bud. Since then I had gone through such experiences as make people old, and at the same time give them judgment. There can be no school, we know it well, for us men and women like the school of affliction; and though I had passed through it humbly and lightly, I hope I had reaped some of the fruits of it. I was, therefore, given to thinking in these days, perhaps even more than now, when my judgment is riper and my decisions necessarily more rapid, and when by custom duties are easier than they were at first, and my mind under greater control. Looking back to my early days of housekeeping and of marriage, and remembering how very hard I had to try to unravel the various problems set before me, I feel a very keen sympathy now for those who are setting out on the same

voyage,—to meet, if they could but tell us, with just the same difficulties over again.

It was a great matter to me in those days to feel that Ann and I could not come to an understanding. But when I sat in my nice sitting-room and she in her bare kitchen, we were, I think, very far apart, and it cost me many a troubled hour to think how I could bridge over the difference and make her feel how I sympathized with her.

That day, in spite of my morning protestations, seemed very long, for I was too shy to go out without my husband, so that I was very glad when the time came for the cloth to be laid for dinner, and when I could reasonably expect him home.

He came in at last, not looking business-like at all. Everything had, he said, been going well in his absence, and papa had worked for both though he was so glad to get him back. I was a little anxious about my dinner, and had only with difficulty

restrained myself from going to see how things were going on, for Ann was so silent I felt sometimes tempted to ask if she knew the time.

I was amply rewarded for my patience, for at the very right minute Ann appeared, neatly dressed, and bringing in our festal dinner, the fowl and bacon, and greens and potatoes.

"Have you not been extravagant, love?" said Brice, elevating his eyebrows at the sight of the four covers.

"This is an affair of my private purse," I said, smiling; and thinking it no bad opportunity of reminding him of the fifty pounds, which he had not yet given me, "and I hope you will like our housekeeping to begin with. This is Ann's dinner, to-day."

Ann could not help being a little mollified by my praise, though I saw she was suspicious of it. Yet upon this occasion she had done

herself so much justice, that I think she could not help praising herself for the dinner which she had served for the first time to her young master and mistress.

Although he must have been tired, Brice insisted on taking me for a walk that night, and when we returned to a very late tea, I began to see how little time would be left upon our hands in which to entertain each other. After all, I should see little more of my dear husband than I had seen in the last few weeks before our marriage. And then the best of it all was that he was so glad to get back. I did casually ask him that night why the kitchen looked so different to the rest of the house, and he confessed that he had not liked to intrude there, and had only ordered what he could think of without seeing the effect.

"It was a forget," he said, "perhaps as well."

“You Brice,” I answered; “and you, so good, forget the comfort of your servant.”

“Never mind, little wife,” he replied, “I shall always be glad to find you are better and more thoughtful than I am.”



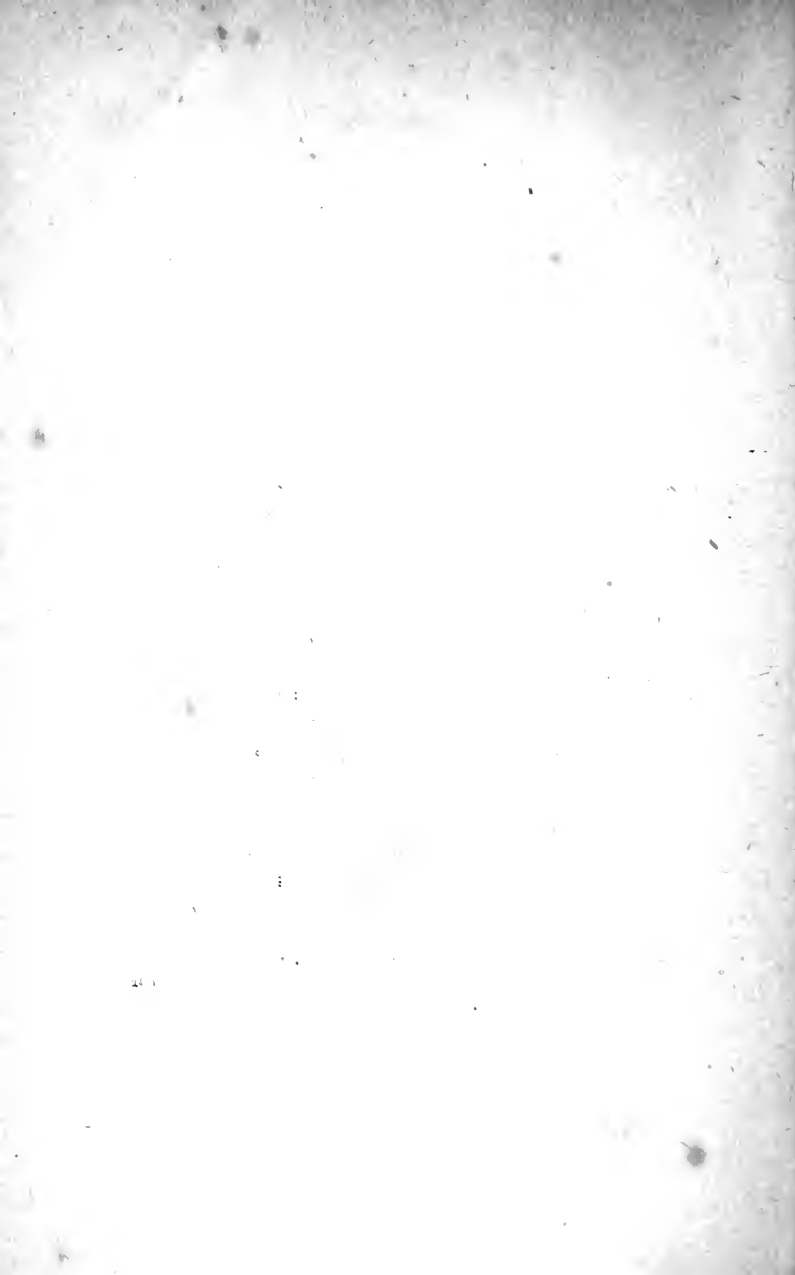
CHAPTER VII.

If solid happiness we prize,
Within our breast this jewel lies,
 And they are fools who roam :
The world has nothing to bestow ;
From our own selves our joys must flow,
 And that dear hut our home :

Our portion is not large, indeed ;
But then, how little do we need !
 For Nature's calls are few :
In this the art of living lies ;
To want no more than may suffice,
 And make that little do.

We'll therefore relish with content
Whate'er kind Providence has sent,
 Nor aim beyond our power ;
For if our stock be very small,
'Tis prudent to enjoy it all,
 Nor lose the present hour.

COTTON.



CHAPTER VII.

BRICE said nothing about the money that night, and I began to fear I should have to ask him for it. I had paid for the viands of our first day out of my own little purse, and I thought I would rather go on borrowing from that than tease him by asking too soon. But the next morning when we were at breakfast, he handed me a leather purse, which looked very business like.

"There," said he, "is your fifty pounds. I am afraid you went into debt, yesterday, be-

cause you were too proud to remind me and take a favour at my hands."

He smiled as he said this, but I felt guilty, for it really had been the case.

"I feared it might be inconvenient to you," I answered; "and as I had a little money in my purse I preferred waiting."

"Mind and pay yourself back then, and be honest," he said, amused. "As I walk into the city I shall fancy my little wife immersed in the cares which the use of money always brings. It will be as good as a farce to see how you manage."

"I hope I shall manage it well," I said, gravely and respectfully. I knew the sum really seemed large to Brice, although I had often had the handling of like moneys, and knew how fast they could go in laces and trinkets; but I said not a word of this. Since my days of riches I had been brought very low, and had conned continually that lesson which Diogenes learned so cleverly—how to

do without. I wonder if all my lady friends know the story of how the great philosopher having done without almost everything but a drinking cup, found a boy one day drinking from the hollow of his hand, and delighted with his independence, threw away what he deemed his last piece of luxury.

Diogenes carried his opinions as did many of the ancient stoics, to extremes ; but there is much in his system which needs to be remembered in this our age of luxury and self-indulgence. He who could not stand before kings only, but could afford to refuse to rise before one of the greatest of earthly monarchs, threw away his drinking cup as one more thing which he had learned to do without.

But we, how little do we take his maxim and example to heart in our study to heap ourselves about with comforts. How little do we regard it, even when every better part of our nature rises to assure us that earthly

ease is but a poor recompense for wasted honour and lost independence.

But in musing now rather with the gathered experience of years, I am forgetting the young wife, who is myself and yet not myself, sitting with a perplexed face over her little treasure.

Brice had gone—bright, even, and cheerful, glad to go as he was glad to come. I had finished my one small duty of clearing the breakfast things from the table to the slab, to wait Ann's further pleasure, for I was always a timid mistress, and disposed to give way in little things, and wait other people's time rather than enforce my own; and I was seated before my desk, with a carefully mended pen and a piece of white paper, which I had already covered with figures with subtraction and division sums. I was no clever arithmetician, but I could manage figures in a common-sense fashion, and in this manner I set myself to deal with the careful

earnings, which my dear husband had entrusted to my care without thought of reserve.

Fifty pounds upon the one side, and upon the other the varied wants of thirteen weeks. First, I set aside ten pounds for rent and taxes, for Brice had just given me this hint to guide me that even in the most expensive parts of London, rates and taxes might safely be reckoned as equalling one third of the rent. This left me forty pounds; Ann's wages were twelve, so that I provided in this way for another three pounds.

It was Brice's own money which he had entrusted to me; he had placed himself in dependance upon me, he worked very hard, had a long walk, and needed something during the day, and the chance of an omnibus when he was tired or late. Five shillings a week was not, I thought, either too liberal or too mean a sum for him to put in his pocket on Monday morning; that took away another

three pounds and five shillings over, and would leave me—take six pounds five shillings from forty pounds, thirty-three pounds fifteen shillings remain.

I had next to consider the coals, and I thought, taking summer and winter together, ten pounds would do for that item, so that I deducted at once two pounds ten shillings and folded it away in a bit of paper, marked “coals,” and put it in a corner of my desk, with the other little packets marked “wages, rent, and pocket money,” and turned further to consider the thirty-one pounds five shillings I had left. I then put aside five guineas as savings towards our dress, or any treats which we might compass, judging that certainly for the first quarter, at least, we should neither of us need much clothing.

I then held in hand twenty-six pounds, or two pounds a week for housekeeping, to save from, or to spend as I might judge best, being determined that this sum was to cover all

minor dress expenses, such as gloves, and many a little thing which the house, and especially the kitchen, still needed. To make all these arrangements would have puzzled me very sadly, had I had no experience beyond that of the lavish home which I had left, but I had lately, it must be remembered, been a pupil in the school of adversity.

I put aside my money, having entered it on the credit side of my account book, reserving only the two pounds for the current expenses of the week. As I did so, I felt bound to acknowledge, with a proud sense of exultation, that all the future comforts of his house—his home, would be due to Brice, to his wise forethought and consideration, and more than anything else to his perfect trust in me. That was the one clever stroke which he had made, and the woman must be lost to all delicacy of affection, who is not touched by such an act of confidence. I know that I was—I gloried in him, and resolved that if good management

could make him rich he should be so. I had heard the maxim that no man can be rich if his wife will not let him, and I resolved to give him my most gracious permission.

When I had paid myself for the dinner of yesterday, I reflected that poultry was not a satisfactory meal in our circumstances, and that while it was expensive it could not satisfy a man after a long walk and a hard day's work, and I resolved in future to purchase more substantial diet, though it did not suit my own fancy. But here, as everywhere else, in housekeeping, as in sublimer work, the grand principle of self-denial holds most good. The master went out to work hard for his household: the master, then, was the first to be considered by the household at home. In all well regulated households it is invariably so, though the tendency of opinions towards woman's right to consideration much leads, I fear, to the upsetting of this good old-fashioned notion. I passed the bill then, at this early

stage of my self-constituted administration, that my own feeble appetite was not to be considered, and that good substantial plain dinners were to be the order of the day—dinners suited to the strong, healthy master, who worked so hard, and whose young appetite needed at this time no tempting beyond the feeling that there was enough ;—enough bread—let him cut what hunches he might need—enough meat to meet his hungry craving—good healthy vegetables, and simple pudding, but no expensive nonsense.

I took Ann into consultation when I had settled these weighty questions, and arranged with her, not without some little unwillingness on her part, that I should take the dusting of my pretty little drawing-room entirely into my own care. More than this she would not permit, and after a bit I saw that she was right. Ann I could see would be slow to love me, but she loved something better than me ; she had a stern recognition of her duty,

and carried it out with a cool inflexibility which could not fail to win my respect. I think myself that I always liked her better than she did me; that, apart from any recompense I had the power to make her by wages, board and lodging, I felt that there was much which I could not pay for, and very much in her lot for which I could not atone. This made me grateful; I never could help remembering that our situations might have been reversed. How much was I the better that I should have the privilege of ordering her about?—of sitting at ease while she worked?—of putting on pretty clothes, and going out into the sunshine while she was cleaning at home?

At the same time that I remembered this, I led her to see that in many things her lot had its advantages over mine. Her responsibilities were less,—“the cares of this world,” the taxes, the rates, even her wages pressed upon me as they never could upon

her : and if it was my privilege to be served, still it was my duty to think of and provide for her as well as myself. To regulate my work so that it should not press upon her ; and while she had only to do the work set her, I had to think a good deal over the arrangements necessary to save trouble, even in so tiny a household as mine.

A friend of mine once told me that when she was a girl she despised dress and never thought it worth time or thought, but she found the consequence to be that instead of placing her above the vanities of human nature, it rather lowered her to them by the mortifications which her sensitive mind was called upon to endure ; so that she found it worth while to change her tactics and to give it a due and proper attention, since which time she had gone easily into company, and had not been troubled.

Many people, I have since found, fall into the same mistake, and fancy that keeping

house means something very easy—at times, perhaps, something rather contemptuously weak, and therefore they are always plunging into difficulties. The truest philosophy is to take it for granted that everything which implies a management of other human beings does require something of the temper which fits a man to carry on a government. To keep house well—truly well—to carry command, and at the same time to win love; to exact obedience, but to be sensitive to the least pain which can be given to another human soul, with like passions and feelings, implies I think a very good woman,—a gentlewoman, and better than all, a Christian.

I fear I did pride myself a little on my housekeeping; but then I am so willing to give the receipt that I hope I may be forgiven, for I acknowledge with all humility, that though by thinking a great deal about it I came to find it easy; yet that the mistakes which I have seen and commented upon in

my own mind have been made by women so much better than myself, that I hardly deem myself fit to hold a candle to their virtues. While I have sat at ease they have denied themselves with self-denial I never could compass; they have worked as I never have; they have been charitable as I have never had the power, perhaps; they have been as slaves, whilst I was reading a Mudie's novel; and yet after all I will not concede this, that as an actual housekeeper, I was not better than they. Only that, nothing more, I give them honour from my heart—honour even for their mistakes. They were not selfish as I, sitting in my pretty drawing-room, have too often been; their very candour over their failings has made me love them, and even whilst I have won more respect I have felt that much honour was really due to them.

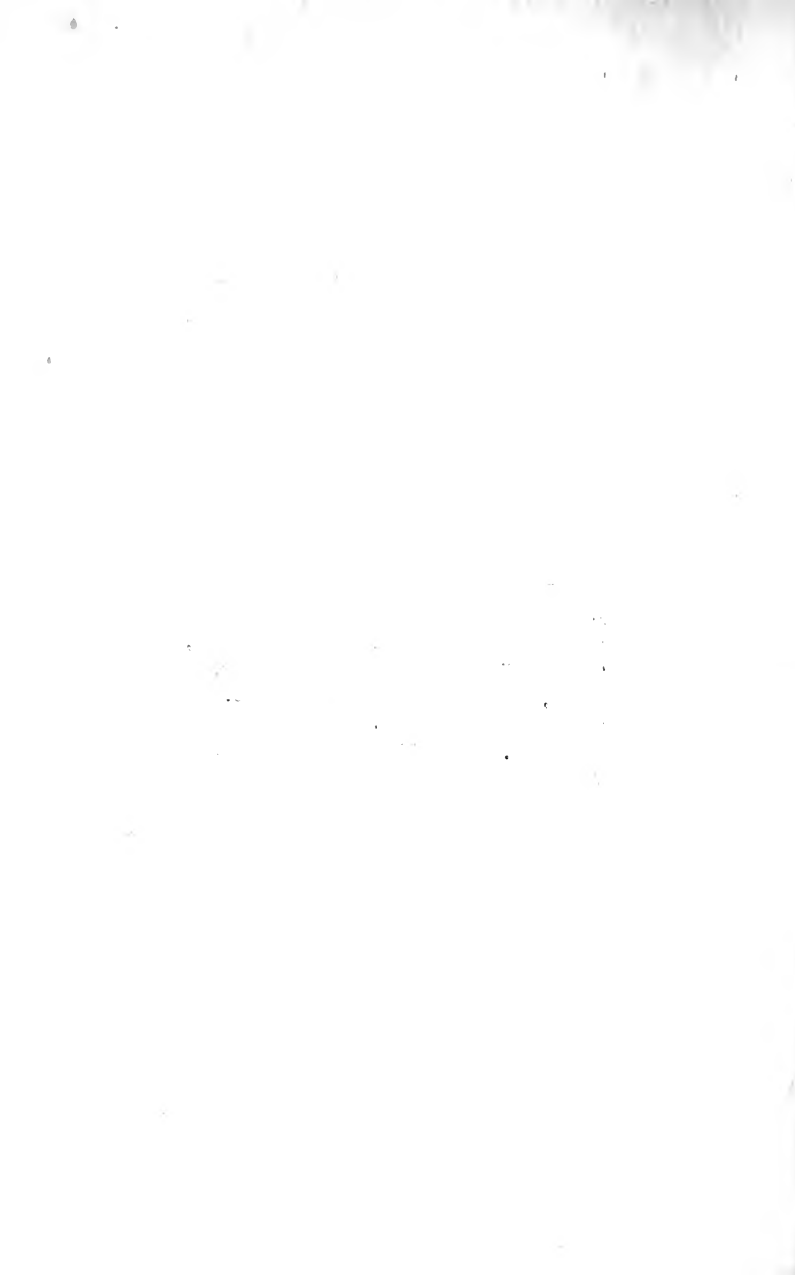
I learned a great deal from Ann; I must say for myself that I was always willing to learn from anyone, and could most humbly at

any time have accepted a lesson from the dustman or scavenger, much more from a woman who, like Ann, had much experience of domestic life and could lay her fingers upon a blot as readily as anyone; a woman, too, who was much my senior not only by years but by her earlier experience of life in the various houses in which she had earned her living almost from childhood. She taught me much when I could get her to be confidential with me, and to place a trust in me. Alas! I fear her experience had been hard, since she found it so difficult to believe in my honest wish to do right.

CHAPTER VIII.

I loved, I love, and when I love no more
Let joys and grief perish, and leave despair
To ring the knell of youth. He stood beside me,
The embodied vision of the brightest dream,
Which, like a dawn, heralds the day of life:
The shadow of his presence made my world
A paradise. All familiar things he touched,
All common words he spoke, became to me
Like forms and sounds of a diviner world.

SHELLEY.



CHAPTER VIII.

BUT I was still a very young housekeeper when I took my seat that night at the head of my table, facing my husband, who I could see gave a rather uneasy glance towards the still covered dishes, when he had finished saying grace. A look of sensible relief came to his face when they were uncovered however, and disclosed a nicely roasted leg of mutton, greens, and potatoes.

“I hope you like mutton, Brice,” I said, modestly, “it is not so nice as fowl.”

“With Alexander’s sauce,” observed my

husband, "it is rather nicer. I must confess your yesterday's dinner was too fragile for me after my long walk."

"Oh, then if you can dine from a joint," I said, with airy condescension, "and can eat it cold as well as hot, you will always have something for breakfast, if you need anything substantial."

"Do not be reckless, dear," replied Brice, with a smile, "even fifty pounds has its limit."

Even fifty! Ah! had I not found it so when papa gave me that sum to fit myself out for my first ball, and I flitted in, dazzling that dear Brice who now sat so soberly opposite me, with my white muslin, my pearls, and my simplicity! But I said not a word of this, and had the good sense to hold my tongue upon all such bygones.

"True," I replied, "but with a little management we shall be quite rich and easy."

“I hope,” said Brice, “that management does not mean a perpetual reckoning up of half-pence, counting potato rinds and sifting cinders; remember I will rather have bread and cheese, or bread without the cheese than that.”

“Having trusted me with your purse, you must trust me with the details of the expenditure too, and remember your only duty is to eat your meals with a good appetite, and then I shall know you are satisfied.”

“Then you see no necessity,” he asked, with amusement, “for reducing me to that bony condition you threatened?”

“None whatever. You are only required, sir, to walk into the city with the air of a rich man whose home is amply provided for. You are a rich man, you will pay your way easily!”

“Thanks to such a clever little wife then,” he answered, really pleased, and I know that

instead of stinting me because I was contented, he would even then have given me more if he had had it to give easily.

"You say that I am rich," he went on, with a little hesitation, "what do you mean by the term? Could we afford to keep up at all with friends or acquaintance?"

"If we will submit to be patronized," said I, making rather a wry face.

"Ah!" said he, with a face as wry. "But if we shut ourselves up from the world when we are so young, it will be but giving up ourselves to an ill growth."

"And," said I, "if we do not make friends while we have youth and spirits to give them in return for their kindness, we can hardly expect to make them when we are old and rich."

"Supposing then we submit to be patronized," said Brice, with a smile, "looking for the time when we shall be rich."

“Or supposing,” I replied, “we sometimes and very occasionally, give such a party as your pretty house is capable of giving.”

“Our house!” said he, correcting me, “mine no longer, my love. If you really can manage such a thing, I shall be too glad, and perhaps I may be able to furnish an extra five pounds by the time that is needed. But meanwhile being patronized as you are pleased to term it, implies expense.”

“Of course,” I answered, easily.

“I mean,” he said, more earnestly, “there would be cabs, fees to servants, gloves, and—” here he became excited, “your dress. I could not bear to see you ill or unfashionably dressed.”

“Thanks, Brice,” I said, and as we had finished dinner by this time, and so ended our little ceremonies for the evening, I drew a stool towards him, sat down at his feet, and flinging my arm across his knee, laid my head down confidentially upon it. “But you

shall not be ashamed of your wife, if I can help it. I have many dresses, remnants of my fashionable days, which will be capable of many a turn about before I go utterly out of data."

I spoke in the confidence of successful love. I knew, or thought I knew that every thing I did, every thing I wore was satisfactory too. "But suppose," I said, "that we first try our income for a year. In one year we shall hardly be tired of each other's society, and then we can take up with our friends again."

"There is no question of tiring," he answered, "but of improving ourselves by the society of those who may be better, wiser, or more learned than ourselves. And if friends make such overtures, must we accept them. I rather think we must now or not at all."

I felt a little jealousy starting up in my heart. Might he not meet, if we went much abroad with people, with men, most likely,

whose society he would prefer to mine. Should I not by one bold stroke cut him off from all and make him mine only. How could I find it in my heart to spare him to others, this man who was becoming so dear to me, that at that moment even while my head rested with such child like action on his knee, I could have willingly taken death for myself, and yes, even for him rather than the chance that there should ever come a time that he would love me less. If he could have seen into my heart, what would he have thought, I wonder, of the child wife who clung so closely to him, and whose love for him had never been, in our most loverlike days, the passion which it was now. But my better self conquered, and I said:

“It shall be as you wish; we will take what moderate visiting is offered, and remember it is not likely to overburden us yet awhile. You cannot expect to be sought after as you were when you were an eligible young

bachelor. You snuffed yourself out, sir, when you married."

"And do you think I mind that?" he said, with a loving caress, as he stooped over me and drew up his small wife into his arms. "Do you not think I would give all the society in the world for my wife."

I was right, however, for though we had passed our decree in favour of society, it was not in any great hurry to take us up, the truth being that we, the Leas, had been out of the world long enough for its busy and ever recurring waves to have swept over the place where we had been and to have forgotten us, and my humble marriage was not likely to bring us to mind again in any very prominent manner.

Of course mamma and Lucy came constantly to see me, and the new footing upon which we stood with each other was the kindest and the nicest in the world. Mamma was so proud of me, her one married daughter,

and took such a deep interest in my house-keeping, that I saw that a new source of pleasure was opened up for her. If I purchased a set of new tea cloths, she examined them with the deepest interest, and I think my establishment gave her as much pleasure as a child would receive from a dear friend's doll's house. This naturally drew us much together, for the doll's house was mine, and was the source of the greatest delight to me at this time, and never indeed lost its hold upon me. I was making my kitchen quite respectable, bright with tins and saucepans and pleasant with crockery, and I took care to make these purchases [on the days when mamma came to spend a few hours with me, so soon as I found what an amusement they gave her.

These purchases were always made out of my weekly savings, and were good and substantial, and such as were needed, and would not be constantly recurring, so that by care-

fully avoiding any frittering away of my money I could see my money's worth in the house, which more and more began to look comfortable and abundant. For while what is spent on dress or theatres and so forth soon vanishes to leave no trace behind ; every well chosen article put into a house adds to its comfort, and serves, too, as a very effective advertisement of a man's respectability, and becomes in a certain sense part of his capital, yielding indeed, in more ways than one, a very good interest. A well shaped chair, a nice carpet, a pretty table cloth, gives to the holder almost a daily interest for the money laid out. My savings were not, of course, quite so magnificent, and were mostly confined to filling in the little things which Brice could not have remembered ; nevertheless, though small, they were part of the capital I speak of, and gave pleasure to us both.

It may seem strange to speak of savings at

all out of two pounds a week, but they really existed. I was surprised at first, but Ann was such a good plain cook, and, if she did not love me, loved her duty so well that there was no waste—no, I believe, not of a potato, and my strong, healthy husband was well taken care of, and yet we could not eat more than a sufficient quantity, and that I found I could pay for, with little more than a pound a week. So that besides my little purchases I was establishing a sinking fund towards that rainy day which Longfellow assures us falls into most lives.

Of course I remembered carefully all my little economies learned at the cottage. I dressed simply, and sent no wonderful collars and laces to the wash ; but all these savings were out of sight, and being applicable to myself never called for the necessity of talking about economy, and saying perpetually that such and such things must be done without. They were done without—that was all

—not mentioned, and therefore very often overlooked.

At this time, although mamma and Lucy came so often to see me, I was necessarily much alone. As I have said Ann deemed it her duty to do the household work, and daring indeed would have been the mistress who got in her way; that is, indeed, much more daring than I ever was, who ever shrank from the rude breath of that stern censure which the uneducated so often convey perhaps unknowingly. But this forced me much, perhaps too much, upon my inner life, and, as in a hothouse, plants are apt to run to waste and to overgrowth, so my deep love for my husband grew and enlarged, and sickened.

How I loved him, how I counted the hours of his absence, how I reckoned upon his words, and how, alas, I often misunderstood his manner; and because I loved and watched him, and lived so upon his kindness, so much more did I feel grieved at his silence when

his business fits came upon him, and he would sit over his calculations forgetting me, I sometimes thought, until perhaps he would startle me out of my evil mood by putting out his hand and imprisoning mine, rendering me idle even, while he went on with his work.

“Always at work, Brice,” I would say sometimes, giving a small vent to the pettishness which would gather in my heart.

“Always,” he would answer, perhaps, “for am I not working for you?”

“Be idle for me, dear,” I would say, coaxingly, and perhaps my words would prevail, and Brice would put away his work and be as I liked for the time. But it did not suit my husband to be idle, his head was in his work; he was essentially a man of business, and I should have to yield, I felt.

CHAPTER IX.

'Tis but her picture I have yet beheld
And that hath dazzled my reason's light.

SHAKESPEARE.

Such is the weakness of all mortal hope ;
So fickle is the state of earthly things ;
That ere they come into their aimed scope,
They fall so short of our fraile reckonings,
And bring us bale and bitter sorrowings,
Instead of comfort which we should embrace

SPENSER.

CHAPTER IX.

IT so came to pass that though my husband did in truth seem to love me very dearly, I was left very much to my own time and to choose my own pursuits, and this, perhaps, is one of the first difficulties of a young wife's married life.

One day, how well I remember it, I found myself with nothing for my "idle hands to do," and well,—I hope it was not the spirit of mischief that seized me, but I determined to tidy my husband's drawers. Now I think this was an innocent amusement enough, and

no husband's drawers should, I think, contain anything not fit for the eye of his wife.

I had, in truth, very little excuse for tidying, for everything was in order; but I said to myself that I ought to count my husband's linen, and see if there was any excuse for setting my idle hands to work in making more.

How little I knew of his life after all, I thought, as I looked over these things; how little he ever spoke of his bachelor habits, its comforts, or its privations. It did console me a little to see how terribly his things had been mended with a sort of neatness, but in a manner altogether eccentric—the mending which is paid for is seldom well done. And then searching further I came upon a huswife, such an old worn thing, not small and dainty and silken, but made of cotton of a dark pattern to stand long wear, and it looked as if it had stood the wear of many years, the

strings of it were so old and tumbled. I examined it curiously; it had deep pockets, and in the indulgence of my curiosity I put my fingers into each of the pockets, from one of them I drew out a piece of paper wrapped round a photograph.

What could photographs have to do with sewing on buttons? I looked at it; it was the picture of a lovely girl, so lovely that her face lived in my memory even through this casual glance. It looked like the face of one who had a history—a history with some tragic meaning.

Who was she that her picture had found so close and intimate a resting place. Oh! my jealous fancy, why was it stirred so soon? Why was it so mad and foolish? If it were as I surmised, and Brice had loved her once, what then? It could have been but a boyish fancy, for had he not been mine these years? Or had he known her abroad, or in that long interval when I had learned to despair of his

coming. Had she rebuffed him, and then had his wandering fancy come back to me?

I folded the paper back sadly enough. I had tidied sufficiently for that day. I closed the drawer and left it; but I could not so close away the remembrance of the photograph. I do think, however, that at this time and afterwards I struggled hard to combat my natural temptation, and that I did in a measure succeed, and I think I should have done so entirely had it not been for the timidity of my disposition, and the natural secresy and reserve of that of my husband.

I made many resolutions to ask him about the photograph in a rallying manner; but I was very sure that I should not carry these resolutions out, and so I did my best to put the remembrance of what I had seen away from me, and that I did not do so successfully must, I think, be charged rather upon circumstances than myself.

I never opened a paper again which he did

not expressly tell me to open, or interfere in any way with his private receptacles.

In this way I soon came almost to forget my little jealousy, and so it seemed to die, and altogether to be forgotten in my interests in other concerns.

Brice was very kind to me, and was ever ready to give full praise to my management of my household matters, and the more he praised the better I think I succeeded.



CHAPTER X.

Virtue and sense are one ; and, trust me, he
Who has not virtue is not truly wise
Virtue (for mere good nature is a fool)
Is sense and spirit, with humanity ;
'Tis sometimes angry, and its frown confounds ;
'Tis e'en vindictive, but in vengeance just.
Knaves fain would laugh at it ; some great ones dare ;
But at his heart the most undaunted son
Of fortune dreads its name and awful charms.

ARMSTRONG.



CHAPTER X.

ONE secret of my success in housekeeping I find now in looking back was that my own diffidence, and even the reserve I had with regard to my own powers, served to develop Ann's talents and ingenuity. I do not think she ever quite found out how much I knew, or did not know, and how far, if I chose, I could supply her deficiencies; but this she did, I think, find out that I never wished to take the praise to myself, and that what I liked best was that she should not be deficient at all, and should have all the credit of her

good management. I was not a careless supervisor, but I took care to show that I did not think my simply overlooking her was the cause of her doing her duty, which I knew, indeed, arose from much higher motives; at the same time, I developed her judgment by most carefully distinguishing between errors of judgment and of intention.

Ann had her temper, as I suspected, but it never interfered with me, because I never interfered with her. She did extremely well for me, and Brice greatly esteemed her; but, perhaps, in my then temper of mind, a worse servant who would have given me a great deal of trouble would have answered better, and called me out of that inner world in which I was beginning to live more and more.

I have said that mamma and Lucy paid me constant visits, and their presence was always healthy to me. They so appreciated my husband; they loved him, and saw all that

he did in the right light. But I had one more visitor who was almost as constant and not at all so healthy ; it was Meta, who came from that great world of society which had forgotten us. Our cottage was such a pretty little affair, and though so small, was so well situated that Meta, when told to take out the carriage and air the horses, was no longer ashamed to drive down to me. Ann was always neat to open the door, and carried such respect with her that even the handsome coachman treated her with deference ; for Meta, when out alone, only brought half the dignity of the equipage, the tall footman being left at home, which was rather a relief to me, and this helped to make the coachman more human under the influence of my stern maid, who knew well how to keep up the dignity of the establishment.

Meta brought with her a mind sick with discontent, but she covered this discontent by an appearance of over contentment with her

lot. Self was fast developing in her—as alas with myself—by the very nature of her life, which at all times seemed, so she fancied I think, to force her upon self assertion; she was alwas telling me how she was admired, and talking of the grand doings of the rich people with whom she was careful to tell me she mingled on terms of equality.

It must be remembered that we had always stood on the border land of really fashionable life, or might have felt in that awkward position had not my large minded father taken care to keep with his like in spite of his great wealth, and by his careful avoidance of a fashionable neighbourhood. But it had not been so with his old acquaintance the McPhinns; they were now living in May Fair, and struggling to be on visiting terms with the chosen of the fashionable world, and just because it was a struggle I could see that it induced that vanity and vexation of spirit, or that over elation of feeling which in our igno-

rance we are apt to ascribe to the life led by our betters, forgetting entirely that what presents temptation to us is quite innocuous to them.

That the life Meta was leading was unreal and unhealthy, I could see more and more ; but had I not said all I could when seated on the wall in our little garden at the cottage ? and I felt that I could as a sister, and that a younger one, do no more ; I could only hope quietly and insensibly to influence her, if she did not influence me. Poor Meta had grown expensive in her habits with her false position, and had adopted little shifting ways which are too easily learned in the border land of fashionable life I fear ; and perhaps, poor darling, she did not know that she really inconvenienced me. At first she asked as a favour that I would give the coachman a glass of beer.

“ Calling on one’s relations,” she explained, “ such things are expected. It is true, it may

not be so good as he gets as when he goes to Annerley" (Mrs. McPhinn's mother lived at Annerley, with a lavish household); "but it will do, and you know, Alice darling, I am obliged to take so much care not to let the servants think me mean."

Ah! but poor sister, was it not mean in reality to bring the well-fed hireling to me for the perquisites I was not really called upon to pay him!

At last the beer became a regular thing, and Ann, not ill pleased perhaps to shew her hospitality to the fine coachman, was gently reminded by Meta with such little airy sentences, as "You will not forget Tony, will you, Ann?" or, perhaps, in the midst of an interesting dialogue with me, Meta would start up in her commanding way, and exclaim, "I do think, Alice, your stupid maid has forgotten Tony's beer; do ring and remind her!" and then chafing inwardly, I

would ring and give the order, but I said nothing. I could not afford to offend Meta, because she was very dear to me.

Perhaps in my foolish confidence, forgetting the wise fable of the owl, who, shewing her nurselings to the hawk, came home one day to find them missing, I told Meta of the ease with which I was managing my housekeeping, However that may be Meta, poor dear, took to borrowing little sums, which she never remembered to pay. One day, when my savings had amounted to a pound, and I had meant to treat myself to a winter bonnet. Meta came in, a little hurried and flushed, and kissed me with unusual fervour.

“I have such a favour to beg of you dear,” she said, when she had been with me a few minutes ; “my milliner’s bill is come in, and it is so much more than I expected, and she is disposed to dun for her money—it is only a few pounds. Can you lend me any help, dear ? if it came to Mrs. McPhinn’s ears I

should get so blamed. She forgets how she forces me to dress, and how nice she expects me to be. My salary may seem handsome, but it is quite inadequate to the necessities of my position."

She said much more—and Meta had a winning tongue, and I could not bear to see her in distress—so I handed her the pound I had saved, thinking a little sadly of how I had meant to fascinate Brice on Sunday.

The following week Meta came down a little stiff and self-complacent, as she always appeared when conscious of having anything to excuse; she wore a pretty fashionable bonnet, trimmed with cherry ribbons, in which she looked remarkably well.

"Do you like it?" she said, glancing at the chimney glass. "I am glad you do. It is only a cheap thing, but we had a grand call to make, and my other looked such a fright. I only gave a pound for this."

"Did you get it at Madame Glacé's?"

I asked, trembling a little for the future bill.

“No dear ; to tell you the truth, she did not send again, and so I thought I would serve out the spiteful thing, and I bought this with ready money.”

“Then you have not paid anything to Madame Glacé,” I said.

“No ; she will wait now until I get my salary.”

“Then, perhaps,” I said, a little impatiently, “you can let me have the pound back, if you do not want it.”

“Silly child,” said Meta, good humouredly, “did I not say I had bought this cheap thing with it ; how can I give it to you back if I have paid it away ? I thought it would serve me a little while until I could pay Madame Glacé and get something worth having.”

I turned away my head to avoid shewing her how much I was annoyed by such a

trifle, and turning, saw the inevitable glass of beer being handed up to the coach box by Ann, and I could hardly restrain my tears to think that my Meta should have turned into such an old man of the sea. Meta did not stay long that day; I suppose she did not find me very sympathetic, and I was glad when she was gone.

CHAPTER XI.

My apprehensions come in crowds ;
I dread the rustling of the grass ;
The very shadows of the clouds
Have power to shake me as they pass.
I question things, and do not find
One that will answer to my mind,
And all the world appears unkind.

Beyond participation lie
My troubles and beyond relief.

WORDSWORTH.



CHAPTER XI.

THAT night I resolved to take Brice into my confidence, and I began by asking if he would mind looking at my account book.

“Certainly not,” he answered, good naturedly ; and as I shewed it to him, he put his arm about my waist and drew my head so close to his breast pocket, that the neatness of my hair was seriously in danger. I saw that my husband was in a trifling humour, and that he looked upon my account book as something very different from his solemn ledgers.

"Do you wish me to admire this pretty writing, darling?" he asked.

"Don't be silly, Brice."

"Well, it is very satisfactory. What a brilliant little accountant you are; why, you actually balance to a farthing. No sundries, eh?"

"Oh, no, not one," I answered, solemnly.

"What pretty business-like writing, darling," he said, musingly; but I was so busy with my own thoughts that, though I was proud of his praise, I did not return any answer to it.

"It is your money, Brice, and you have a right to see that I spend it properly."

"My love," he said, with emotion, "did I not tell you that I was much more than satisfied; how could I fail to be so? Did you not reach to the end of the quarter, and that your first, without so much as asking me for a shilling? Is not my house well cared for and growing more comfortable every day?"

Have I not more pocket money than I care to spend?" and here he drew out a whole handful of silver, careless fellow, all loose in his pocket. "What should I wish to look over your accounts for? do I not see the result of them every day?—do I not feel them?"

Here he jingled the money back into its careless repository, and gave me such a hug, that I thought he was going to put me right into his pocket with the silver.

I could not fail to be pleased. I liked to hear him grow eloquent, because he so seldom indulged in many words.

"But you must see my difficulty," I said, resolutely, and rescuing my head from its dear, but by no means comfortable resting place; "the money is yours."

"Nay, when I give it to you, it is yours."

"Yes, mine to spend in keeping your house; but lately a good deal of it has gone in a different manner," and here I took him into confidence as to my perpetual loans.

Brice looked grave.

"I am sorry for this," he said; "but I see no course open but for you to oblige her as much as you can, within bounds. It would be more satisfactory, of course, if she were really in need; but she is not. And yet the claims of kindred—even of inconsiderate kindred—are difficult to set aside. I fear that a quarrel with your sister—a very unpleasant thing—would be the consequence, unless you could put the difficulty plainly before her."

"I fear I love her too much," I replied; "but I am easy now that you know it, and I daresay I can manage. Only it is unsatisfactory; it is not like really doing a kindness—it is like putting the money down a drain."

"There is always some drain for one's money; perhaps to shew us the vanity of it," said Brice. "You must submit, my dear, trying to control what you cannot avoid, and

in future you may find it better not to boast of your riches or your management."

"Cold policy," said I, "and savouring of hypocrisy."

"Of worldly wisdom, perhaps; but your account book has suggested another idea. Would my little wife like to have some work to do?"

"What work, Brice?"

"Would you like to keep my books—would you be a nice confidential clerk? If you will, I can spare you such a salary as would amply cover any drains upon your money."

My heart beat fast with pride and pleasure.

"Would you really trust me with your business books?"

"Very gladly, if you would put some of this beautiful writing into them. I was forced to send away our book-keeper yesterday, finding he was deceiving me, and I know that my wife would never cook the accounts

—at least, I could trust her; and there is so much both of carelessness and dishonesty in the commercial world. Will you do it, or will it be a bore?”

“Certainly I will; I shall be proud to help you.”

“I will pay you at first a pound a week; more when I am richer.”

My colour went up to the very roots of my hair.

“How much,” said I, “do you pay yourself for your work?”

“Two hundred a year,” he said, laughing, “which I give to you.”

“But you shall not pay me,” I said, “for helping you. Is not your interest mine? When you can well afford it then increase your expenditure, if you like; but for the present use whatever I may save in your business. I, too, if you will let me, will take such an interest in it as may pay me well. I shall no longer be jealous of your long cal-

culations, from which you have shut me out."

Brice looked unfeignedly pleased.

"I had no wish to shut you out, my love, only business must be done, and if it runs over in the day it must be finished at night, and I shall be very glad of your help. I have many weighty ventures on hand, and a clear head will not be amiss, as a helper. You will soon find your way."

Brice could not have chosen a better way of contenting me. A mind like mine needed work and plenty of it to keep it from those internal temptations to which an over sensitive mind is so subject.

The next evening he brought home his books, and my task began. I could see that the man who had been entrusted with them had so complicated them that the accounts might be right or wrong, might indeed be true or false, but they were not clearly anything.

Honest men's accounts I thought are clear as the light, and honest books must be far easier to keep than dishonest ones.

I therefore set myself to unravel the difficulties, and after many days work I discovered the errors which had been made, and the system of larceny which Brice had fortunately discovered before he had been very seriously injured.

I made this quite clear to Brice at the same time that I begged him to spare the man.

"But if I spare him he will fleece others," said my conscientious husband.

"Then send him to me, and I will not spare him, but I will not disgrace him."

The man came to me, cowed and ashamed; he knew that he was at my husband's mercy. I showed him the books, I took him over every item; I would not spare him one witness of his offence. I spoke sternly, I made myself a perfect Draco, and the man

stood before me dogged, like a beaten hound. Then I changed my tone. I suffered all my womanhood to appear. I was young; Brice said that I was fair. I knew that I was earnest, and that what I wanted I wanted with all my heart. I urged his repentance upon him; I pleaded even with tears; I stood up for his manhood, his honesty; I fought for this man's soul even with himself.

He saw how earnest I was; he saw that I really cared. He who had been sullen and dogged, as one who had had his sin exposed to a woman, gave way before my piteous entreaty that he would save himself. He wept like a child; he entreated that he might still be allowed to serve my husband; he had sinned, but he would sin no more; he would repay as men could repay their masters.

"Mr. Glynn has entrusted his books to me," I said; "I shall serve him faithfully, and I cannot part with them."

“He sends me going without a character, and I am ruined. If he will keep me I will work as a porter, as anything; but only let me feel that you are watching me and I am saved.”

I was touched. I promised to speak to my husband, and to do my best for him. His fault had not been made public, or if some knowledge of it had escaped it had not been rendered explicitly against him.

“I will do what I can, Mr. Brook,” I said; “and if I can succeed you will not do injustice to my confidence?”

He promised with broken language and with tears, and telling him that I would let him hear, I dismissed him.

The struggle with his harder nature had been intense, and had perfectly exhausted me. Temperaments such as mine pay dearly for what seems like power. I was shaken all over and quivering in every fibre of my frame.

An intense nervous exhaustion set in, which prostrated me for hours, which would probably have vanished had any other call upon my energy succeeded rapidly ; but which in my solitude almost tore me to pieces.

We are, each of us, one of a class ; and I daresay, though I never heard anyone else express this feeling, it is very largely shared. I felt as if I had done wrong, or made myself foolish—I lost belief in myself. I felt as if I never should recover my courage again to do a like action, and when Brice returned, I was inexpressibly subdued. But his presence was so satisfactory to me, that it always had the effect of restoring my tranquillity. I set myself to plead for Brook ; and Brice, who would at that time have done much more for me, promised to find work for him of a different kind, since I convinced him that to send him away was to ruin him utterly.

“I will give him one more chance,” said

my good husband; "write, if you like, and tell him so, and that you promise not to ask me to give him another."

I felt that I could not ask more, and I wrote and did as he told me very explicitly.

CHAPTER XII.

Too well he saw how day by day
Some other emblem of decay
Come on her lip and o'er her brow,
Which only she would disallow.
The cheek the lightest word could flush ;
Not with health's rose, but the heart's gush
Of feverish anxiousness.

, LONDON.

CHAPTER XII.

BRICE'S clerk, Brook, was re-established in the counting-house, and with this act of mercy, my cashiership began. I ventured to alter the system of book-keeping a little, and to throw into the business accounts a woman's peculiar clearness of perception. I made them easy and not difficult—so easy, that a grown child could readily have comprehended them, and so that an estimate of gain and loss could be arrived at in a few minutes.

Brice was infinitely contented.

"You make it as clear as the light," he said, fondly.

"Exactly," I replied. "When your honesty is to me as clear as the light, is it not easy to show it? I am more than contented, husband of mine. If I had found you in your business anything short of what you are in daily life at home, I should have been sorely disappointed."

"I hope you would not find that," he said, gravely.

"And yet," I replied, "men are accustomed to say that there is one honesty for society, another for the mart; that men of business have, in short, acknowledged tricks of trade—which, though recognized in the cliques to which they belong, they would be ashamed to bring openly before their fellow men."

"It should not be so," he answered, quietly, "as if speaking of ordinary duties which cost no struggle."

How I gloried in him—gloried more day by day as I came to see and know more of the working of his business, which combined at the same time so much caution with so much energy. The risks he ran sometimes seemed to peril all he had; but he never risked more than he had a right to lose; and I began to feel with him and to find a pleasure in his work, second only to his own. His ventures held me as it were in breathless expectancy for days, and then we would go on again calmly for a time, only to gather strength as it seemed for such another venture. The risks of trade I saw were enormous; sometimes we lost, and sometimes we gained, and it required a clear head to see exactly what was the balance between gain and loss. A great deal of money began to circulate through the business, to be tossed about as it were with a kind of sleight of hand, which made it very difficult always to tell where the money was—whether it had a real existence, whether

it had grown more or less, whether it was somebody else's, or was coming like Dande's shower of gold—to overwhelm and corrupt us. It was no knowing, indeed, where it was ; like Will-o'-the-Wisp, it was here, there, and everywhere—this floating gold; but this I could see, that nothing would be more dangerous than to call it ready money, and allow it to find its way to the fishmonger and the poulterer, or even ^{as} to the butcher and the baker. Safer far I thought it to leave it altogether alone, and to keep steadily within the income upon which we had deemed it safe to start.

Since then I have often thought that this may be one reason which prevents men so often from being confidential with their wives. They fear lest they may be dazzled, and even wish to expend that slippery thing called floating capital, which they themselves find it so difficult to control. This may sometimes seem so small as to make their hearts quake ;

at others, so large as altogether to outshine the modest yearly income which it is alone safe, perhaps, that they should spend. I learned to look on figures as figures, to know that they did not always represent resources which were available at a minute's notice, and so came to regard, with more contentment than ever, the small income which we never allowed ourselves to exceed.

Brice seemed to trust me, and I fondly believed that I knew all his secrets in spite of his very reticent habits ; or rather I flattered myself that there were none to know, that he walked before the light of day with that pure honesty of purpose which needs no covering.

Meta did a little disturb me sometimes. Mingling with a world which, if it did not snub her, at least attempted to do so pretty often, she had grown a little sore in her views of men. She had had several incipient courtships, which came to nothing, which unfortunately too often do come to nothing

with girls in positions such as hers, and she had lost faith in human nature, though not faith in her own powers and in herself. She had grown suspicious of people, and would tell me tales which she heard in her daily intercourse, and which, like the caustic philosophy of Thackeray, lowered all men to a level—a level very much below that upon which I was accustomed to place Brice. Perhaps she was provoked a little by my praises, and perhaps what appeared to me to be virtuous and good fidgeted her. The punctuality and exactitude of his habits, as I saw them, seemed befitting a man of business, but she, I fancy, thought them slow and wanting in that spirit which gains much by appearing to throw aside everything.

They could not seem like want of spirit to me, who knew where and how that spirit was concentrated ; but this apparent slowness not being the fault of a man of fashion made her rather inclined to look down upon him,

judging him by the flimsy patterns of men which were daily submitted to her inspection, until her taste grew to approve them, as tastes will grow to almost anything.

She would laugh at my fond belief in my husband, and would make me indignant by repeating the foolish things married men said to her, would button on her pretty pair of kid gloves and say, "would not nice little Mrs. So-and-so be angry if she knew the platonic friendship which led to this innocent present."

Oh! Meta—Meta! how spoiled she had become. No mother's watchful eye at hand to guard and check her. How little I had known my own sister, so dear to me even now.

"Still waters run deep," she would say, laughingly, sometimes, "and I daresay Brice is not better than his neighbours. What is it Thackeray says of the staid husband who has just heard Missie's new tune on the piano, when a few hours after he finds himself in

Kensington Gardens. Oh! fie upon the men; you must take them as they are, Allie."

"I am very well contented to take Brice just as he is," I would answer, trying to laugh and answer in the same vein; but feeling secretly hot and indignant at the very thought of mixing my Brice up with such people as Thackeray liked to pourtray.

"Nonsense, Allie; his secretive ways would drive me mad. Of course he never shows you his letters?"

No; he never did. How I longed to be able to say, he let's me even open them if I please; but I could not tell this untruth. Unless his letters in any way concerned me he never showed them or alluded to them, and I could very well see that as a matter of course it was expected that they should be left alone. I had no answer to give and Meta laughed.

If there was one thing which distracted

me more than another it was Meta's laugh; it said so much. But I kept patience with her, so in spite of the coachman's beer and the shillings and half crowns which I was called upon to lend I should have missed Meta's visits very much. Sometimes, indeed, she made herself very agreeable, and amused me very much with accounts of her successes or defeats, always told with the same good humoured manner, for Meta was seldom moved very deeply.

About this time, however, all such general thoughts were put out of my head. My health, which had been so good all my life, began to suffer, and Brice became very anxious at my pale face, my languid gait and continual headaches. He attributed much to the work which he had set me, and of which I had grown so fond; but I would not hear of it, and refused to put away his books, pleading that they interested me more than anything else.

“Let me be of use to you while I can,” I would urge, sometimes choking back the tears that would come at the thought of leaving him and the happy home which he had given me, and Brice would yield as he always did yield to me, but he would look up sometimes and watch my varying colour with a trembling lip. Once too, when this evening work had been unusually prolonged, on account of some mistake which had arisen, I felt myself growing indifferent and giddy, and then Brice spoke to me, and I felt that I could not understand the question, or find an answer to fit; a moment more, and I remember hearing a chair fall; he had sprung to me in time to catch me before I quite fainted away.

When I came to life again—slowly and after a long interval—Brice was on his knees, and Ann was tending me carefully, whilst a cold blast from the open window made me shiver as I shuddered back to sensation.

"If this had been death," I thought, "and I had gone from him thus suddenly," and I moved my head from the sofa pillow to his shoulder, with an hysterical burst of tears.

"I will go and get her some spiced wine," said Ann, and left us.

"My darling," said Brice, tightening his clasp of me, "I thought I was going to lose you," and here the strong fellow suffered a quiet sob to escape him.

How could I doubt he loved me, he who tended me with more than a woman's gentleness, for nothing is so gentle or touching as the tenderness of a strong man; the softened intonation of his voice all tells, even in contrast with its rare display, the large humanity which is awakened within him. I was very happy when he half led, half carried me to bed that night, and when finding that I could not sleep, he brought his book and read by my bedside. What power had Meta's laugh, or Meta's quotations from Thackeray

to awaken my jealousy, or to disturb the strong love, the perfect friendship that existed—or perhaps, Meta would say seemed to exist, between us then?

I fell asleep at last, my hand in his, and I knew afterwards how long he had sat so still, fearful of awaking me, for the candle had burned down in its socket.

“My tired dear,” I said the next morning reproachfully, “why did you sit up so long? How will you be fit for business to-day?”

“Ah! my dear,” he answered, “you say often my heart is in my work, and I think so myself sometimes; last night I doubted it, and began for the first time to feel sure that it was wrapped up in a very troublesome and frightening bit of goods.”

“Were you frightened, Brice?”

“Of course I was; so do not, please, play that trick again.”

“Would you be sorry, dear, if this was only a warning—if I were to be called away?”

"Allie, do you want to torment me? Why do you talk of such dreadful things?"

"I will not, Brice, if it pains you."

"You need not get up; indeed, you had better not," he said, facing round from the looking glass where he was settling his tie, and very badly he was doing it, too, I must say. "I am going earlier this morning, for I shall get round and call on Dr. Addison and send him down to you, and I will drop a line to your mamma to come, or send Lucy."

"Oh! Brice," I said, rising on my elbow, "I am feeling quite well this morning, and it will be so expensive to have Dr. Addison so far."

"I hope not," said Brice, in a reckless tone; "but if he is it cannot be helped. He understands your constitution, and I will not have it trifled with."

"He cannot know much about me; I do not remember being ill before."

"Still, he must know something, as he at-

tended the family so many years; any way, he must have vaccinated you," he added, trying to laugh.

"Well, I think he must have done that," said I, conceding a point; "and any way, he is a very dear old friend, and I do not mind seeing him, only you know, doctors do cost something."

"Of course they do; but we, thanks to you, are economical as a rule, that we may meet necessary expenses like these without trouble."

"Oh! I can meet them well enough," I said, easily, and lay back contentedly on my pillow, resolved to get up directly my husband's back was turned, taking good care not to contest the point beforehand, so as to force him to make me promise to remain in bed.

Oh! happy, happy days, in spite of weariness, and faintness, and headache.

CHAPTER XIII.

Pleasure that comes unlooked for is thrice welcome ;
And if it stir the heart, if aught be there,
That may hereafter in a thoughtful hour
Wake but a sigh, 'tis treasured up among
The things most precious ! and the day it came
Is noted as a white day in our lives.

ROGERS.

CHAPTER XIII.

KIND Dr. Addison came to see me ; talked cheerfully, and very quickly combated the morbid fancies which were gaining on me. There were no symptoms of death in me he told me candidly : I must live, and live bravely. Not that he used these words, the dear old man ; but he who had seen me grow from infancy to womanhood dealt affectionately with me.

“Dr. Addison tells me I have no fatal symptoms ; I am not to die, but to live to

tease you, perhaps, ever so much longer," I said to Brice that evening.

"And did you think to die and leave me?" he answered, piteously; "would you make no effort to live for my sake?"

"I could not," I replied; "it was like a fatal lethargy stealing over all my powers. I seemed always as if something drew me away from earth."

"Life is precious, my darling—life is our great working day. We must be presumptuous to think we have done our work so well that we should wish to shorten our time of probation."

"I will try to remember that," I answered. "You take life so solemnly and silently, Brice, as if you were always listening for orders."

He smiled a little sadly.

"You find me too silent at times—I weary you—yet I talk more to you than to anyone else."

"No, you never weary me—never; your

silence is eloquent of your untiring, uncomplaining life of industry, and teaches me more than the longest sermons. Lucy was here to-day, and did me much good, but you do me more."

"You find your days long and wearisome," he said.

"Not wearisome exactly, nor long, but they are always full of shadows stealing up to haunt me."

"What shadows?" asked my husband.

"Dark thoughts and fears, which say sometimes that if I live long your love for me may cool or change. No promises of yours seem to have power to master this fear."

Brice smiled.

"Poor child!" he said; "these are vain shadows, indeed. The years which come will surely only fit us to each other the better; every association, every joy shared, or trouble alleviated will but form a fresh tie to connect us. Did we not love each other—use alone

would in time form a link which we should be very loathe to break."

"That is a more sensible way of viewing things, certainly," I answered; "but the worst of it is that all you say is not even needed when you are here. These thoughts are the temptations of my lonely hours."

"Then I think we will try change of air. You shall go with Lucy to Hastings; you will return as bright as ever."

"Oh, no, I would much rather not leave you; it would but make me miserable, and I am saving money to take us both into the country next summer."

"Well, then, dear, suppose you try a better plan still—suppose you say to yourself, 'I will trust my husband's love as I trust everything else—my health, my fortune, my friends—to heaven.'"

I shivered.

"But if it should be the will of Heaven to take it from me to try me so far—"

Brice did not laugh, the cunning fellow ; he humoured me, and spoke still of himself as of a third person over whom he had no control.

“ Why, then, you must be a brave little woman. You must say to yourself, ‘ he is a worthless, bad fellow, and deserves no more at my hands than I deserve at Heaven’s. Yet he is my husband, my poor husband, doubly poor because he is so bad and wicked, and I must pity, forgive, and love him still.’ ”

Brice was clever. I was not in a humour to be laughed at, for everything had put on for me an aspect of sickly solemnity—laughter would only have mortified and sent me back upon myself ; but as he dealt with me, I could confide in him and speak openly of the powers of darkness which assailed me. Sometimes these mental temptations varied, and I would feel oppressed by unknown sins, and a terrible weight would lie upon my spirits. Was it madness—I sometimes

doubted with myself—which was thus stealing upon me, putting mists before my eyes, so that I could no longer discern things correctly? Had my mind given up its power that my spirits drooped, and that every shadow which passed over them assumed the wild phantasmagoria of a dream? I felt as if life had lost its bearings for me, that some struggle was going on somewhere out of sight, and that as the struggle fluctuated one way and the other, that so I seemed to fall helpless or to be torn assunder. Was this madness, I often reasoned with myself, or is it that we are none of us altogether sane?—that with his perfection man lost also his sanity, and that we stand so upon the verge of reason that any state of health, any nervous disability, can throw us over, though not so hopelessly, thank God, as that we may not be drawn back and recover ourselves.

I did not recover myself, I was drawn back by the same invisible hand which had seemed

to let me go to the wild disorder of my own imagination. It came from no power of my own, but rather like the sweet breath of Heaven which no man yet, let it blow as softly as it will, has ever been able to control. As an ugly dream it passed away that black mood of distrust and fear, and to it there succeeded a great joy. I felt myself called suddenly to a great destiny, it was true that that destiny had been shared not by thousands or tens of thousands, but by countless millions of my fellow creatures; but it did not on that account impress me the less deeply. I was to be the life of another life eternal as my own. I was to be the mother, of a living soul. Oh! great joy, it overpowered me, it brought me on my knees, waiting, meekly bowed down, for Heaven to pour its blessings on my unknown child. It brought me to earnest contemplation of that Heaven so that by refining and ennobling my own spirit I might gain a spiritual high affinity for the

soul which, lasting through all time to all eternity, yet had its beginning in my own. For good or for evil would not every passion, noble or grovelling which actuated me, make its impress on this new work of the Great Creator ; therefore I must ennoble myself. I tried to think great thoughts. I read the brightest and best thoughts of others, the noblest poems, and I looked upon nature, such nature as I could find in the grand old gardens of Kensington, or upon the varied sky which is above the heads of us all, with new eyes.

And Brice, how did he feel I wonder in the depths of his soul, and do men think out such subjects with such long continuous thoughts as we do ? Do they not rather lose them amidst the business of the counting house, or the busy mart, and only return to them when some chord is touched ? I do not know. Brice was not accustomed to tell his thoughts, and I could only guess them by a smile, a look, a caress, a something which

told me that I had grown to be more precious than ever in his eyes.

At this time, too, complications were arising which called for all his energy to right the business in which he had invested all his energies, and he was often worried, though I knew how to soothe by patiently going over the accounts with him, and ever bidding him be of good heart when his brave temper seemed likely to give way.

What a blessing then did I find my economies. I could keep my joy, free of money embarrassments. I did not need to come to him for any help, I could make my little preparations without vexing him.

One night when we had been sitting together, occupied over the books, which ever concerned me, because they were as it seemed to me, the complete journal of my husband's life when he was absent from me, and because when I laid my hand upon them I felt that I

held all his secrets; all, let Meta say what she liked. Oh! that I had—alas—

We had finished our work, and then Brice said to me :

“Look what I have for you, little one; did you think me very unkind not to bring it before, but I could not, this run upon the business, has, you know, locked up all my means. But here it is at last, dear, better late than never,” and with a slight contraction of the face, such as men show when they are paying away money they cannot afford, he laid a new Bank of England note on the table between us. He smoothed it out with his hand, and I saw that it was of the value of ten pounds. I noted that even while I marked the look upon his face.

“Thank you, dear,” I said, not at all as if I saw all the pretty things which daily tempted my eyes in that large shop to which my walks were almost always directed, but indifferently, as if I was so rich as really

scarcely to be moved by the expressive crumpling thing which I put back with my hand, "I do not need it—indeed, I do not; keep it and double it if you can. I hardly know how to spend all the money you allow me, we live so simply; and your dear hearty appetite needs so few expensive dishes."

"You are pretending, Alice," he said, seriously. "I have been trying so hard to get this, and now you say you do not want it."

"Am I pretending," I said, shyly, but seized by a sudden impulse; "come and see."

He would have left the disputed note upon the table, but I folded it neatly up, and made him put it back again into his pocket. Then I took a candle, and led the way to a room which he seldom entered, and which I had long held under lock and key.

Here were all my treasures—the small bassinette, lined like a nest so soft and pretty; the well stored basket, containing all those articles so dear to a mother's heart,

and then a chest of drawers, full of little soft articles of dress, as if preparations had been made for the dressing of a dozen good sized dolls. I had been inexpensive, even here, though sadly tempted to be extravagant; but I had made up for the want of beauty of material by extra care in my workmanship.

I never shall forget the smile which brightened my husband's face with that illuminative power which his smiles always had.

"You have done all this—you, darling, while I have been fretting that I could not give you more, and thinking what a hard, unkind husband you had, and that some men would rather have gone into debt than used you so ill."

"It is your money, Brice," I said, consolingly. "Your wise forethought in telling me exactly how much you could spend, and in letting me have ready money. You have been very good to me; why should I be

always trying to get more from you? You are content with my arrangements, and I pay my way like a princess; but tell me, dear," I said, almost in a whisper, as I glanced from my store of treasures timidly to his face, "are you glad it is coming?"

"Glad?" cried my husband, as he threw his strong arms round me and gave me such a hug as the wolf might have given to little Red Riding Hood, previous to eating her; and I verily believe I might have shared the same fate, had I not escaped from his powerful grasp. It was only a way he had of expressing his feelings when words failed him; it suited the concentrated energies of his nature to vent it not so much in soft speeches as in hugging one almost to death.



CHAPTER XIV.

Society, friendship, and love
Divinely bestowed upon man,
Oh, had I the wings of a dove,
How soon would I taste you again.

COWPER.

True love in this differs from gold and clay,
That to divide is not to take away.
Love is like understanding that grows bright
Gazing on many truths. * * *
* * * * * Narrow
The heart that loves, the brain that contemplates,
The life that wears, the spirit that creates
One object, and one form, and builds thereby
A sepulchre for its eterni ty.

SHELLEY.

CHAPTER XIV.

ALTHOUGH I linger fondly over this time, I need not do so here; suffice it that in due time my baby was born, and that having almost made wreck of my life altogether, I did at last struggle my way back to strength and to my home and household duties. Our child was a great delight to us; she was as new to us as if our darling had been the first baby born into the world, and I was always discovering new treasures in her. I was for the most part my own nurse, for I was jealous of her love, and it was only a pleasure for me

to tend her; but for appearance sake I kept a child nurse, who carried my baby out, and we used to go together to the Kensington Gardens, and for baby's sake, remain hours there.

The gloomy thoughts and weary temptations of my earlier married life seemed to have vanished like a dream, and I was always building bright castles in the air for my baby to inhabit. The long hours in the open air did me good, and made me more hardy than I had been.

Life, indeed, at this time was so full of sunshine, that I could not help feeling that it would repay beforehand for many after cares. Indeed, at last this thought began to haunt me, and to steal upon me unawares. As if unhappiness were a necessity without which we could not live long, I was afraid of the great joy which had come so undeserved to me so unworthy. I would rejoice while it lasted, but I would hold myself

ready to give it up. Change and chance, I had read, happen to all men, and the change which would come to me would bring nothing but the worse, for my happiness was, in an earthly sense, perfect. I confess to this weakness with shame, but I began to look out for sorrow—to be fearful of it, and instead of castles to build prisons. I fancied this was preparing for trial, but there was never a greater mistake made ; instead of nerving, it unnerves. It is like thinking that because winter is coming, we must not enjoy the sunshine, but rather inure ourselves to cold by living in an unwholesome cellar. How much better to brace up our energies by a thankful enjoyment of light and air, leaving our sorrows with an easy mind to His merciful discretion, who measures them to us with no willing hand. Who knows whether they will be needed at all. May not thankfulness—of which it is said that the Lord loveth it—keep the soul so healthy as

to call for no strong remedies from the Great Physician.

What had I to complain of?—simply nothing. What then had I to fear?—nothing again; and yet I did fear; feeling so unworthy, as I said in excuse, of the great blessings I enjoyed,—and so that which I greatly feared came upon me.

One evening when I was dressing for dinner, making myself nice for my husband's eyes, that I might sit down to play with baby and wait for him, I heard his step upon the stairs.

“Allie,” he said, “would you like to go to the theatre? I have an order for the Haymarket, and if we are very quick I think we can manage it.”

I was delighted; I was young enough to love such pleasures heartily, and to feel at times very sorry that society had overlooked us and forgotten us, and that the little purse I had saved for such expenses had never

been needed. I should see the fashions, the evening head dresses—all the pretty frivolities which women, and specially young women, like so well, and I was very willing to start off with Brice, to hurry forward the dinner, to attire myself in evening dress once again, and to bring out my almost forgotten opera cloak.

I confided baby to the care of both Ann and my little nurse, in the most solemn terms, and received the most earnest promises in return, for Ann was getting fond of me, and I think she was pleased to see her young mistress dressed and going out at last.

We took a cab to the Haymarket, for I did not care to save upon so rare an occasion, and I had now so many duties to perform, that I could not afford to make myself ill.

I was so pleased to see Brice once more in an evening coat; it was like old times, and with the little consciousness of looking better than usual myself, I took my place in the

stalls by his side. The lights, the pretty dresses, the fashion around me, made me feel as if the days of our simplicity had been a dream, and had I not left such a treasure behind me, I might have fancied that I had slipped out from my Clapham home, which we had left, so it seemed, so long ago.

I forget what the play was about; some light piece in which Charles Mathews played, but it quite contented us, who were at this time so unhacknied in any kind of enjoyment, and I was ready to smile my thanks when Brice wrapped my cloak carefully about me and led me out to the lighted and crowded lobby.

I was standing by his side wondering in what corner I could best hide myself while he went for the cab, when I heard my own name mentioned, or rather the name which had been mine, and turning, saw Mrs. Nelson, who, if not an old and attached friend, at least, had been one of the visitors of our old

establishment. I had hoped that she would remember us, would see our marriage in the paper, and somehow find us out and come and call, but she never had done so ; and now, here she was as friendly as ever, and calling me Miss Lea. I made her understand by a few confused words that I was married.

“And may I come and see you,” she said, with hearty kindness. “I have hunted for your mamma in every directory in London, and could not find her.”

This might have been true, and yet, perhaps, a few judicious enquiries in our old neighbourhood might have found us, though very certainly mamma had gone out of the way of all directories. I was, however, too ready to believe her. I told her where we lived, and even wrote it down upon her tablets ; and when Brice came hurrying back, I could perceive that he was really pleased to see that one of our old acquaintance had found me at last.

There was time for little further explanation, and we went our several ways. Mrs. Nelson had promised to come and see me, and mixed up with my remembrance of the play was the thought of whether Mrs. Nelson would like baby, and how I could manage to have her best robe on her always in readiness.

There was a nice little supper waiting us, for everything about us had grown to be very comfortable.

Brice was very pleased at the recognition of Mrs. Nelson. We had grown rather to overvalue the society which we missed, and my husband, who meant to be a rich man, as he often said, when working very hard, liked to feel that he should carry with him the sympathy of his fellows; besides, there was something naturally refined about his feelings and habits, which quite prevented his accepting any kind of society. He wished it to be thoroughly respectable—dull even, rather than bright with Bohemian brightness, and

because he knew that this society was really the most difficult of attainment he placed a high value upon it.

Mrs. Nelson was kind, pleasant, and kept a good deal of company, but as we remembered it, all of the kind which Brice desired. Therefore, to all appearance, our evening had been a great success, and my husband was eminently contented with it. Would he have been so if he could have known ?



CHAPTER XV.

'Tis strange with how much power and pride
The softness is of love allied ;
How much of power to force the breast
To be in outward show at rest,—
How much of pride that never eye
May look upon its agony!
Ah ! little will the lip reveal
Of all the burning heart can feel.

LONDON.



CHAPTER XV.

No one who is accustomed to society, to the giving and receiving of constant visits, can imagine the fever of excitement into which I threw myself in the expectation of Mrs. Nelson's promised visit. In vain I scolded myself for possessing the feelings of a parvenue ; in vain I reminded myself that to call and receive calls had once been as familiar to me as the eating of my daily bread. It would not do ; I was full of anxiety for baby's appearance, and so occupied with a hundred minor

cares, in anticipation of this influx from the great world, that I afterwards came to the resolution that if ever I became rich I would have a wonderful appreciation of such feelings in others, and would never look upon them as weak or despicable.

But fortunately for me, Mrs. Nelson's call was not long delayed. Two days after she drove out to see me, and came with the kindness of an old acquaintance, and I recognised the fact which made her come alone. Of our ruin she had known, of course ; and she could not guess as to the position in which she might find me.

I could tell, however, by the little words of approval which she dropped now and then, that my compact little establishment pleased her, as having nothing vulgar or uneasy in it. She was full of enquiries for mamma and my sisters, and the half hour sped for me only too fast. She admired my baby, too, and who that has worked fifteen tucks in her baby's

robe will not sympathise with me in wishing for some one to look at them.

But the half hour over Mrs. Nelson went away, and left with me an indescribable longing for the great world to which—as it seemed to me—she had gone back, leaving me shut out.

Why need I have murmured? that society which I coveted could give its loungers nothing better than I enjoyed—my baby, my independent home, and a husband upon whom I doated? And yet I did long for it, nevertheless; we were such presentable people, I said to myself,—my husband was so sensible, so well informed, as all must see when they could induce him to shew it, that it did seem hard that he should be shut out. He had abandoned his young men society for my sake, and now I had nothing to give him in return. Ruined we had passed out of the world, and it refused to acknowledge that we were once again on the road to competency.

I told Brice my troubles that evening, and he received my confidence with all seriousness and attention.

"Everthing worth having is worth waiting for," he said, when he had duly thought over the point at issue; "it would be very easy to know plenty of people, but that is not what we want."

"I do not see that it is easy," I said, "even to know anybody."

"Well, perhaps not," he answered, musingly "if your Aunt Bona were in town it would be different."

Circumstances had taken Aunt Bona to her native country to tend a brother who was sick, and there it seemed she was likely to remain for some time at least.

"Yes, I suppose there is no use in thinking about it," I replied, gloomily; "only I feel that your marriage has shut you out."

"From what?" he answered, with that radiance which I liked so much, and which

was rather a kind of shining over his whole face than a smile. "Shut me in, you mean, with all I love best."

That ought to have contented any wife: I am afraid it did not quite content me.

"We are too young for such seclusion," I said; "we have still so much to learn."

His brow clouded.

"I thought of that," he said, "long ago; and had you continued at Clapham, it would have called for much courage to draw you from such a sociable home to the one I knew I alone could command."

Then it was to my loss, my ruin, my utter seclusion, that I owed the great treasure of his love: should I not be much more than content.

"Ah! but then," I said, "I should have been rich, and you would have had your place in the world."

"My proper place is what I shall make it myself—I have no other; and if it is hard

work going up hill, remember it is far better exercise than going down: we shall widen our prospect by degrees."

Brice did not meet my objections by attempting to despise the grapes which were out of our reach; he did not call society vanity, and vexation of spirit, and full of petty ambitions and annoyances. He looked upon it rather as a good fellowship in which men have an extended opportunity of shewing kindness, where, too, matched with men of like standing and opportunity, each might spur the other on to a rivalry in greatness of feeling, elevation of purpose, and nobility of action. It satisfied me much more to know that he felt that the grapes which hung out of sight were sweet and worth the eating, than if he had affected to despise them.

With this conversation, therefore, I tried to put away all thought of the subject, and to go on my appointed way with my usual glad content, not murmuring at a lot which indeed

to all appearances was most singularly blessed.

I had returned Mrs. Nelson's visit, and had found her not at home, which was unsatisfactory, for the butler opened the door with a little surprise, as if a lady on foot was something strange to him; and though with that exquisite penetration which servants so often possess, he did not fail to see that I was acquainted with the world he served; he yet shewed that he was called upon to exercise such discrimination, and that, of course, I might have been a dressmaker.

With this call seemingly ended the whole thing, and though I did sometimes speculate as to whether my card had been received, I at last put my fashionable friends out of my head. But this was not destined to last. One day when the London season was at its height, there came a scented envelope containing an invitation from Mrs. Nelson, to dine with them, to meet her daughter who had come up from the

country to stay with them. We accepted, Brice, with the calmness of a man who only saw in it one of many business ventures ; I, with unconcealed delight.

I had that pink silk made up, which mamma had given me on that happy birthday which had preceded our downfall, and I easily found amongst the old finery now so long packed away the white roses for my hair.

I have said that I was very small and diminutive, but I made up for my want of height by my carriage, which was erect and important, and by the full sweep of my train. Brice was sufficiently complimentary—at least, after looking me all over, with a glance which would have detected a pin out of place, he said, slowly :

“That will do very well.”

He was not given to that style of compliment which Mr. Weller designates as the calling of Wenuses, so that I was quite con-

tent, and we started for our party in high good humour with each other. I told Brice that he looked charming, which in my eyes indeed he did.

Mrs. Nelson received us very kindly,—that was the best of her, she never half remembered you, she forgot you entirely, or remembered you altogether.

It was rather a large party that we found assembled, and scattered over the long double drawing-room; they looked very well, still a glance into one of the many mirrors which hung about the rooms, satisfied me that I was in fashion with my new dress, whilst the simplicity of my coiffure kept me out of any difficulties. At the same time the early hours I had been keeping and the quiet life I had been accustomed to lead, gave me a freshness of which few daughters of fashion could boast. In a few minutes, and growing accustomed to the unwonted brilliance of the scene around me, I recognised some old friends, and was

soon the delighted centre of a little group and the recipient of eager congratulations on the double honors I had acquired during the period which had shut me out from perhaps even the memory of the great world I used to inhabit.

CHAPTER XVI.

Alas ! and is domestic strife,
That sorest ill of human life,
A plague so little to be feared,
As to be wantonly incurred,
To gratify a fretful passion,
On every trivial provocation ?
The kindest and the happiest pair
Will find occasion to forbear ;
And something every day they live
To pity and perhaps forgive.

COWPER



CHAPTER XVI.

It was like being brought out of shadow suddenly to a full burst of sunlight, to be placed at that table, next the host too, and one of a handsomely dressed assemblage. It dazzled me, and the power of summoning ready words went from me; I was but a dull companion to Mr. Nelson I felt. As a bride I should probably have been the same, but now I attributed it to my long retirement. I glanced timidly across at Brice, was he, like myself, taken at a disadvantage. No truly, there he was assisting Mrs. Nelson with as much cool-

ness as if he were carving the leg of mutton at home. Presently too, when the conversation became general, I could hear him giving with his usual modesty, what seemed to my astonishment, well weighed opinions upon subjects which I was not aware had ever occupied his attention. Not only had he the courage to speak in that clear tenor which allowed every word to be distinctly heard, but to my equal surprise I saw that he was listened to with attention and real interest. He was at all times temperate, but I could see that the extra glass of wine gave him confidence, and awakened him from the silent satisfaction of his usual demeanor.

I rose from the table with a glow of triumph, and throwing one kind admiring smile to him—for he also followed me with his eyes, those eyes which could be so eloquent, and then as proud as a peacock, I led the marshalled band of ladies from the room. It was kind of Mrs. Nelson so to give

me the chief, the stranger's place, so to remember that it was my first introduction to her house as a wife. Certainly, when her multitudinous engagements did suffer her to bring you within the atmosphere of her presence she did all well.

Her daughter, Mrs. Phillimore, was my senior by several years; still we had known her well in days gone by. She was a sweet, easy woman, who, as it were, sat her way through life, and took all its duties without exertion. Her husband, an older but more active individual, was devoted to her, and her children idolised her. Many a better woman has been passed over and forgotten. Perhaps it was that she took care to be always comfortable and at her ease, and that she wished everybody else to do so, too: her selfishness went no further. She did not like to be disturbed, but she carefully abstained from interfering with other people's rest or comfort.

She made me take a seat by her side upon

the easiest of sofas, with a tasselled cushion for my feet; while her more energetic mother rang the bell, and anxiously requested the presence of her grandchildren, with their governess Miss Butler.

Presently, while we sat thus at our ease, there entered a group of nicely dressed children, who directed their steps instantly towards us; they were accompanied by a young lady, upon whom my attention was fixed at once: surely I had seen her somewhere before. She came forward with a little child clinging timidly to her skirts; presently, the child seeing her opportunity, and finding herself a little nearer, left her with a spring, and buried herself by my side, amidst her mother's ample skirts. Being thus deserted, the governess stood for a moment as if uncertain what to do, and I had thus an opportunity of the more closely observing her. She was tall, lithe, and graceful as a Greek statue; her dark hair, bound in ample coils

about her small head, was suffered to fall forward upon her broad but low forehead ; her features were fine and carefully chiselled ; her complexion dark and clear, and her eyes, startled as they were now, were, it seemed to me, capable of the most exquisite passion. She was a beautiful creature, far my superior in good looks, I told myself in a moment, haughty of air and manner, and yet she stood there unnoticed, unIntroduced. No one spoke to her, and presently she subsided into a chair at a side table, and opening a book of engravings, slowly turned the leaves.

Miss Butler—I could not recall to my mind any of my acquaintance who had borne that name, and yet I felt convinced that I had seen her before. I was inclined to go to her as she sat in that wide room so lonely, and to ask her if she remembered me ; but Mrs. Phillimore held me by silken fetters, and would, I think, have thought it very odd if I had left the place she had chosen for me to

speaking to her governess. Yet, though I petted her little child, a dear little, shy, golden-haired thing, and listened to all she had to tell me of her other darlings, I kept up a watch upon this beautiful lonely thing sitting so apart.

“What a lovely girl you have for a governess!” I said to Mrs. Phillimore at length.

“Do you think so?” she said, in a tone as if I had said something strange, and she raised her eye-glass, and quietly contemplated her employée.

“Well, perhaps she is,” she assented, after some scrutiny; “to tell you the truth I have not had so very much time to observe her. I have been to Paris, and while I was away mamma chose her. Not that I object to pretty girls,” she added, with a smile.

How I envied her easy, caressing manner, and I said to myself, “I shall be like her when I have been a wife as long; then I shall have learned to confide in Brice as easily as

she does in her husband; then long habit will so have drawn us together that there will be no room for shadow or distrust." But now a pang shot through me at the very thought: could I venture to have such a pretty girl to teach my baby? Oh, shame upon the ugly thought! Why should I do such dishonour to my husband?

"I fear, however," continued Mrs. Phillimore, "that I may not be able to keep her; not that I see anything to object to in the girl herself, for she seems very steady at her work, and the children like her, but her family are so low."

"Indeed," I said, with pity; "yet she looks lady-like."

"A deeply passionate creature, too," continued Mrs. Phillimore, sinking her voice still lower. "I had quite a scene yesterday, between her and mamma, and had some difficulty in quelling the storm. Not that I ever see the use of storms; people say they

clear the weather, but for my part I like blue skies."

Here she seemed disposed to leave the subject as wearisome to me, but I was impelled by curiosity to keep her to it, and I asked—

"Was she in the wrong?"

"I really do not know," said my companion, shrugging her fine shoulders; "whoever does know who is wrong in a quarrel? Her father—such a wretch—oh! such a wretch, smelling of brandy and tobacco, came and insisted on seeing her; that I think was her offence. Mamma insisted that such a person ought not to be admitted to the house—that was mamma's, and so followed excitement and tears. She told me, in a burst of something like hysterics, that she had a wretched life, and though she sent half her salary home, it did not content him, and he is always abusing her because she will not tell him the address of someone from whom

he hopes to extort money. All this is not pleasant, and you have no idea how low the man is. I fear I must part with her."

My heart was full of pity, as I turned once more to look at the girl bending over the book, which evidently had no interest for her.

Just then the buzz of the coming gentlemen changed my thoughts, and I looked out for Brice. They came in talking, bringing with them an element of satisfaction. Truly, man is male and female; neither being complete without the other, and always better and brighter, to my thinking, when together.

My eyes were on my husband—my dear, dear husband—who would, I thought, search round the room for me, and would be glad to see that I was watching for him.

He entered behind two or three others, and the moment I caught sight of his face I knew that it was startled from its usual composure. Was it with unaccustomed wine? or— I

turned to where the governess had sat so sedate, so colourless, so apathetic. Her eyes were shining, her colour brilliant; her lips parted, as if some exclamation had wished to escape them. She was looking towards the door.

I wondered—my heart sank. I feared I knew not what; but he came up to me without turning aside, and observed, with a voice which had, I fancied, some constraint in it, “That it was already late.”

I said we would go soon, but he had better get some tea first; and he went away to get some tea.

Presently I saw him walk up to Miss Butler, and sit down with his back to me. I could see that he turned over the leaves, and seemed explaining something; but for this, her listening attitude appeared to me to be too eager.

“Did she know he was a married man,” I asked myself; “or was she in her dependent

situation too eager to accept the homage due to her beauty to ask any such questions?"

Once I observed that she interrupted her listening to turn and look at me with a critical manner which offended me. Then a group surrounded our sofa, attracted perhaps by Mrs. Phillimore, but I found myself compelled to talk—to bandy words when my thoughts were absent, and my attention was by force directed from my husband. In a little while he came up to me and asked if I was ready to go.

"Yes, certainly; but where?" I thought to myself, for the first time, with some faint colouring of real offence, "to be shut up with him alone in a cab."

We said good night and went. Miss Butler did not change her place; but I could see that her fine eyes were on us.

It was, however, in that parting glance that I identified the likeness which had been puzzling me; the beautiful governess was

the original of the portrait which I had found hidden in the pocket of Brice's huswif. Alas! did I not do well to be jealous.

How the cab rattled on our way home; I was almost grateful for the noise. I felt sick, and did not care to try to talk in that noise. Brice put his arm about my waist and drew me to him. I suffered the embrace but I did not return it. What business had he to flirt with other people's pretty governesses. I knew that he had only talked soberly for half an hour, and that I had not been able to see even his face—only the affectionate attention given by the governess.

When we stood in our room together, I said carelessly, but I fear a little contemptuously—

“Could you find no other lady to talk with than the governess?”

I have said that I had feared to excite that anger which my husband never allowed to express itself; and there was a look upon

his face now which made me tremble. He, who at all times was so sweetly gentle, looked annoyed and pettish.

“If you are going to be jealous of every woman I speak to, it is enough; you may decline all future invitations.”

I would have explained, have palliated, excused myself. No, he would hear nothing.

“I have thought over the subject since we talked of it before our marriage,” he said, emphatically; “and I have come to the conclusion that a jealous woman is despicable, and the woman who can be jealous of me simply a fool.”

That my husband had had some annoyance previous to my words I could see very well, but fortunately his very intemperance had the effect of stopping my further speech, and taking up my candle I went up to bed.

That night we exchanged no more words. I was very bitter in my thoughts, but I had

the good sense to remember that Brice had doubtless read my thoughts, and had been justly offended; nevertheless, in my thoughts I was very bitter.

CHAPTER XVII.

There is a feeling in the heart
Of woman which can have no part
In man ; a self devotedness,
As victims round their idols press
And asking nothing, but to show
How far their zeal and faith can go.
Pure as the snow the summer sun
Never at noon hath looked upon ;
Deep as is the diamond wave,
Hidden in the desert cave—
Changeless as the greenest leaves
Of the wreath the cypress weaves.

LONDON.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT breakfast Brice was conciliatory and gentle; the storm was past with him—that short storm which had shown itself by the one sudden clap of thunder. But, nevertheless, he was more than usually thoughtful; perhaps he was vexed that he had hurt me—that his well controlled temper had been allowed to explode. He did everything possible to please, except making allusion to the cause of our quarrel. I was not satisfied with this. I had all a woman's longing for talking the matter over, for dissecting the ques-

tion, for telling what I felt and did not feel; and not gaining the opportunity of doing this I fancied that the peace which Brice was setting up was but a hollow peace. He had been very harsh to me. I must confess that I was afraid to resent it with the warmth I really felt, and well was it for me that it was so. Woe to that friendship which has broken down the wise barriers which the most loving relations should hold up between themselves and their tempers.

Brice was not a man to be thoughtlessly offended, and I knew it. I paid him all the little necessary attentions during the meal. I collected for him the memoranda he was accustomed to take with him; and then, as he was going he kissed me, taking me in his arms to do so. I was melted; I let my head fall upon his bosom; I kissed him passionately in return. Did I not love him with all the concentrated energy of my nature, and should I sullenly send him forth to a long

day's work in the city, from whence—who can reckon upon the events of a single day—he might never return.

But I felt a fresh stab, when turning at the door his neat little bag in his hand, he said—

“I am afraid I may be late, and I shall dine in the city. Why not go and see your mother to-day. Shall I come there, and fetch you home.”

“No, thank you; get home as early as you can,” I answered. “I am too busy to go out to-day.”

Then he was gone.

My business was not altogether *à* fiction. I was short coating baby, and really had a great deal to do, but I fear I did very little that day. Baby was cutting her teeth, and was fractious and not amusing at all; perhaps I had lost the power of amusing her. I can fancy how Ann, stern moralist as she was, or my little Betsy of lighter mind, might have

drawn morals from me of the vanity of parties and fine dressing, and company in general. It may be that they summed up the whole thing by observing that missis was cross as two sticks.

I did my best not to be so, to be gentle in my corrections, and not fidgetty in my duties, but I have little doubt that I was unsuccessful. The day was too long, but I had no heart to go out, and excused myself from going with baby, and sent her to be carried on the shady side of the nice old Kensington Road.

My fingers lay idle, and my books failed to interest me; my thoughts were too busy in rearing the fancied fabric of my own unhappiness: this was how it shaped itself. Brice all this time had fancied perhaps that he loved me, but the sudden vision of so much beauty must have awakened him to his error; he had believed he liked little women until the lythe and graceful creature appeared again before him; he would try to be good, and here I sighed

over the vanity of such an attempt, but that wretched governess with her wild, passionate eyes would not let him. If they met again—and was it for the chance of meeting this girl in her evening walk with the children that he dined in town? He had said that jealousy was despicable, and here was I with more rapidity than an Othello, weaving for him such a plot as—ah, well had not Meta told me such tales.

I started; Meta was at the door with that horrid coachman, with his insatiable taste for beer.

Meta came in to hear about the party; she had seen a lady who had been there, who told her that I looked lovely.

“And Brice—how did he get on?” she asked.

“He talked admirably at dinner,” I said; “I was quite proud of him.”

“That was right,” said Meta; “I like my relations to shine. Mrs. Bruce was telling

me what a nice man she thought him, and that he really was quite superior; she told me, too, that she thought him so kind, for he was the only man who said a word to the poor, neglected governess."

Meta's eyes were on me; she knew my weak point, too. My tell-tale colour flushed up over my face, which had grown so weary looking with that long morning's fancies.

"Was she beautiful?" she asked, provokingly.

"Very beautiful!" I admitted.

"Ah!" said Meta, with her airy laugh, which never came because she was really amused; "I thought men were never so kind for nothing—Thackeray against the world for me. And so Brice talked with the pretty governess, and displeased you. Silly child! as if there was any harm in what he does before your face."

"Mrs. Bruce is a silly gossip," said I, angrily. "What harm was there in my

husband talking for half an hour with anybody?"

"No harmin the world," said Meta; "how could there be, silly Allie. And you are not really vexed, are you?"

Her serious pity was almost worse than her raillery, and awakened in me the idea that Mrs. Bruce had told her more than she chose to repeat.

Meta looked at me furtively and silently for a minute or so, and then seemed suddenly to remember herself.

"You look down in the mouth!" she said (why would she use those expressions?) "but a bit of the dog that bit you will make you all right. See what a treat I have brought for you—an opera box for to-night! What time will Brice be home?"

"I am very much obliged to you, but it is of no use. He is at the counting-house to-night, and does not dine at home."

Now he had not in so many words said he

was busy at his office, but I presumed that he meant me so to understand it; and, besides, after last night I did not care for the opera. We care for these things when we are at ease, or must drown care at any cost. I was not in either state of mind just then; I rather needed leisure to nurse my grief.

Meta started up.

“To think of losing an opera box! I will drive back, and on into the city. Mrs. Mac Phinn complained yesterday that the horses were not exercised enough: I suppose she meant I liked chatting with my friends better than keeping on the move.”

“Pray do not,” I said; “if Brice has really business to do he will not leave it, and you will have your trouble for nothing.”

“Fiddlesticks!” said Meta, “men like operas as much as we do, every bit. The only thing is, Tony” (that was the name of the thirsty coachman) “will need a shilling, can you lend me one?”

"I would rather you did not go on my account," I said, sturdily.

"Nonsense," she said, airily; "you grudge the shilling, but I don't; so it does not matter."

I gave her the shilling, not unwillingly, for I had come to make a kind of average of Meta's loans, and to provide for them. To-day I was indifferent to shillings as to opera boxes.

Meta went off all in a heat with the hurry and importance of her mission. She turned back to beg me to be dressed and ready for Brice; "and look your best," she added, "and then no pretty governess in the world can rival you; only the worst of it is men do take advantage of our dependent position to say and do things they would not to anyone else."

This in a tone of confidence: had she found it so, poor Meta? had she learned the bitter experience she was always airing before

me, by scorning the poor shelter of her narrow home, and casting off its shackles ?

After all the opera tickets did divert me a little. At least they would bring Brice home earlier than he had intended, and how when you are in love you feel chained as it were to the desire for the beloved's presence. I did not want my husband to compliment or fondle me, I liked him better that he was chary of these attentions, but what I did want was that he should be somewhere within sight or hearing. It was enough for me that he should be resting in his chair reading, paying to all appearance no attention to me. It was the subtle essence of his presence only that sufficed me. Ah! truly I had lost my freedom; I was, without thinking of it, carrying out the curse. "My desire was to my husband," aye, even upon my knees, my love for him colored even my prayers, and I fear warped and stinted them often. What did I ask of Heaven with passionate petition but his

love, his nobility, his goodness. I was turning the most legitimate object of affection into an idolatry which was making the whole heart sick.

I dressed myself at the time when Brice might be expected to return, and sat down in my opera cloak to read and wait for him. To wait until I gave up all hope, and knew that the time for its being worth while to get to the opera was long over. Then I went upstairs and took off my fine clothes, and sat down by baby's bassinette and cried. I was not given to tears, but I could not help it, I had sat so long waiting and doing nothing, and I began to think I had nobody in the world to care for but my baby, and she—well she slept in the most heartless manner, sucking at her thumb with an enjoyment which seemed to shut out any remembrance even of me, her mother.

Then, when my tears had been long dry, and my cheeks had begun to burn in a

becoming manner, there came to me a feeling of such happiness. Ah, it was only because I heard a well known hand upon the latch, and my husband's loud heavy step in the passage below. He always made such a noise in his movements, how could I suppose he could be the one to creep and contrive and sneak his way into sin.

What is it that Scott says of us :

“Variable as the shade,
By the light quivering aspen made.”

The sickly fancies of the day fled before that healthy sound, and I went down to meet him.

I had been sitting with baby, I said, in explanation of the unlighted room, which was not cheerful, and yet—well this was the first night Brice had not, late or early, come home to dinner, and perhaps it was as well for him to see how unsettled and uncomfortable it made me.

As I lighted the candles and we were thus

suddenly enabled to see each other, he looked at me sharply, or I fancied so. He was pale and worn.

“How tired you look,” I said, startled, then suddenly remembering, I said: “Did you see Meta?”

“Meta, no. Why should I?”

“She brought us an order for an opera box, and when she found you were not coming home to dinner, she insisted on driving into the city to tell you, for she said she was sure you would like to go.”

“It was intrusive,” said Brice, with unusual sharpness, “she wished to see how the business was getting on.”

“I do not think so,” I said; nay, I knew if she had any sinister motive it had been rather to ascertain if Brice was really detained by business, but I could only dimly guess how angry he would be if he thought himself thus spied upon.

"I am very sorry you could not go," he said. "Can Ann give me a cup of coffee?"

I rang for the coffee, and then said:

"I dressed and waited for you, hoping you would get home if you could."

"Yes, but you see I did not know."

"If you had, would you have come?"

He paused, some answer rose to his lips and then failed to be uttered, the answer that did come hurt me.

"I am too tired for cross questioning, do you mind doing the books now?"

I fetched the books and we went to work and made up for last night's idleness by steady and vigorous attention, but all the time I was puzzling over his allusion to cross questioning, though I was too much afraid to disobey him. Unfortunately for him and for me, my old fear was stealing back upon me, I had tasted of his anger and I had trembled at it, I certainly did not care to awaken it again.

CHAPTER XVIII.

'Tis an important point to know
There's no perfection here below.
Man's an odd compound, after all ;
And ever has been since the fall.
Say, that he loves you from his soul,
Still man is proud, nor brooks control ;
And though a slave in love's soft school,
In wedlock claims his right to rule.

COTTON.



CHAPTER XVIII.

WHEN Brice left me the next morning, with that air of old business absorption, which had always subdued me—I took myself severely to task—I said to myself, and that with emphasis, “That with a man of his nature, it would be impossible to quarrel.” That no one but a selfish termagant could dare to do it, and that if she did, it would not answer. He had a way of withdrawing himself from the attacks of temper, as a snail, which at once encases itself in its hard shell, and therefore, a quarrel, if it ever does so with anybody, would not

bring him into greater confidence. He was a man that would never turn from the ivy that clung to him—but then, that ivy must, by long and tender attempts, and by slow and scarcely perceptible efforts, have fastened itself around his sterner mind. “Never again,” I said to myself, “must I quarrel with Brice.” My jealous temper must be subdued—my sensitive pride must humble itself to take with thankfulness such a meed of his affection as he might please to give to me. He was a good man, just in all his actions, and honest as the day; at a period of great national dishonesty—even in confidence over his books, I could detect nothing which the most fanciful could allege against him. I was proud of him, and I must try to be contented.

Why did I speak to myself thus? Had I not detected, or fancied that I did so, that there were depths in his confidence which I had never sounded, thoughts I had never shared. Had I not seen at last, that no two human

souls can be entirely amalgamated, and that in the most intimate relations which can possibly exist between human beings they are still two independent beings, and not one. How could philosophers of any school say that souls such as ours could ever again be merged into one essence, however mighty? It seems to me, that the history of the human mind is the most wonderful thing of all, and that no one really reading, and analyzing it, can long be led into the wild theories of life which are accepted by men who say though it is difficult to believe that they really do, they refuse to accept the easiest solution of all our difficulties.

What did Brice know of my long and wondering musings over him, my attempt to fathom his confidence, to be in sympathy with him everywhere. And how little could I really carry out the object of my earnest desire, how little could I read him—even as little as he could read me.

In the midst of all these thoughts, which bore possession of me more or less all day, Meta came down to see me, and this time without the carriage.

“I have stolen a holiday,” she said; “and if you will have me, I will spend the rest of the day with you. Brice, I daresay, will see me to a cab at night.”

I told Meta I should be very glad to keep her, as indeed I was. Was she not my sister, and did I not love her well, if she would only leave her doubting Thackeray feelings at home, but no.—

I had taken her upstairs, and made her thoroughly comfortable, and had contrived an impromptu luncheon for her, and had graciously allowed her to nurse baby—a privilege of which she was very modest in availing herself—and then with baby on the floor between us, we had sat down to work. I tried to interest her in my work—a pelisse which I was braiding for my pet, but though she said

“yes” and “hem,” it was evident that she was not really noticing it. No, rather she hastened on to the object of her own thoughts.

“You did not go to the Opera then,” she began; “I thought you might after all.”

“No,” I said, braiding a little fast, “Brice did not come home; but I am quite as much obliged to you. There are the tickets, you see. How valuable yesterday—how less than nothing to-day.”

“You are a clever little philosopher,” said Meta, laughing, “but, who ever heard of any thing being less than nothing! I went all the way into the City, only to find that Mr. Glynn had left the office a quarter of an hour before, and was not expected to return. So, of course, I made myself easy, thinking he had gone home, and that you would have your treat after all.”

“No,” I answered. “It was very unfortunate, for I do not know when he had been late before; and I dressed in the hope of his coming, which made it the more trying.” I

spoke easily, as if I had ventured to be in a pet with Brice.

"And where was he after all," she asked, suddenly raising her eyes from the bit of work she was pretending to be busy with.

Now, Meta's eyes were full and round, and penetrating; and when she fixed them on me I could not help flushing up. My face was always a tell tale of the worst sort; it always added a little to the truth.

"I do not know," I said.

"And you never asked him, you little puss."

Now, this was a still more awkward question; I had asked him, and he had told me that he was too tired to be cross-questioned.

"Of course he was out on some business or other," I answered; "but what he did not tell me. We lost the opera, and there was an end of it."

Meta had, however, gained her clue, and her curiosity was on the alert, but she dropped the subject then, as abruptly as she had com-

menced it; nor did she return to it until we all sat together at dinner.

I thought when I told Brice that Meta was spending the day with me that he showed a shade of annoyance; yet, however that might be, he was very courteous to her. But at dinner she began again about the vexed question of the opera, and said, in a rallying tone—

“You never said you were sorry I had my drive into the city for nothing yesterday.”

“It was a pity,” he answered, coldly, I thought, “but I did not know you were coming, you see.”

“How very tiresome it was,” reiterated Meta. “Where were you after all?”

He looked up straight and quickly at her, as if he would have asked what she meant by such a question; and then I thought he glanced at me to see if I had prompted it.

“At what time did you call?” he asked.

“It must have been half-past five,” said Meta, eagerly.

"Then," said Brice, "I think at that time I must have been, so far as I can remember, in King William Street."

The answer was direct, but it told nothing beyond the fact that he did not intend to yield to questioning, and after that Brice subsided into the silence which was too habitual to him. I could not be certain whether he had taken offence, or whether he was simply absorbed in business thoughts.

Early in the evening Meta left us, being under orders as to the time of her return, and Brice walked with her a little way, and saw her into a cab.

When he returned he was in one of his silent humours, which were at all times awful to me.

He drew out the books, however, making no comment on Meta's visit, and we sat down together.

Presently, when we had proceeded a little way, he said—

“ I have started a private book, which I find to be necessary.”

In order that I might know how to proceed he was forced to explain what this book meant. It would, I perceived, at once withhold from me the key which I had hitherto possessed to the whole of what was going on. Although the burden of the most intricate accounts would still rest with me, the private book would enable my husband, as I readily saw, to pay away money of which I should know nothing. I should do the work, but, as it were, blindfolded.

I laid down my pen. To do myself justice, I forgot my foolish fancies in the sudden horror of the thought which had come over me.

“ Brice, my love,” I said, excitedly, “ you who have been so honest, so clear in your honesty too, that I—that no one could mistake you—are you going to give yourself a loophole by which you may fall into the trading dishonesty which has alone brought ruin upon

our mercantile classes. Better let us live upon bread and water, put up with anything than that you should become like the bad men with whom you are forced to have dealings."

I spoke excitedly. I was too earnest to be afraid even of him. What else could be the meaning of a private book withheld from me, who, until now, had known everything.

To my surprise, Brice, instead of checking me, looked at me with admiration. He put his arm about me, and drew me near him, whilst he said, in a voice husky with emotion—

"Do not fear for me, you have no need; men are oftener than not led into dishonesty by the extravagance of their wives: you know I have nothing like this to fear. I desire, however, to have the key to my affairs under my own special and private supervision. If under these circumstances you prefer giving up the accounts say so, and I will engage a clerk."

“Any clerk,” I said, “could do what I am doing; only your most confidential friend could do what I have done.”

“You keep my accounts better than an ordinary clerk—more clearly; and I can trust you as I trust myself, but still I must conduct my business in my own way: I intend to keep my accounts in the manner I state. Will you, or will you not, go on with them?”

What was my will to that of Brice? I saw that he was determined, and I yielded, of course. I accepted a measure of his confidence, by which I should once have felt highly complimented; but it was impossible now to feel anything but mortification. I saw that he was grieved to vex me, but that he never faltered in his determination on that account, and I tried to submit with a good will.

I did so submit; weak, and jealous, and fanciful as I was at times, there was still I

think some good in me. I did not want my own way further than that I believed my way was the honour of my husband.

I laid my hand upon his arm, my head upon his shoulder, and looking at him with tearful eyes, I said :

“I did so glory in your honesty, my love ; it was like a crown to me. I was so proud to think that there was nothing you need keep even from the fanciful eyes of a woman who sometimes, I know, sees mountains in mole-hills.”

Brice bit his lip, but he answered :

“If I ever could feel inclined to tarnish that honesty for my own sake, I could not for yours.”

“Only,” I urged, “men in trade often use an honesty which is only fictitious.”

“I know they do.”

“But you will not—you never will.”

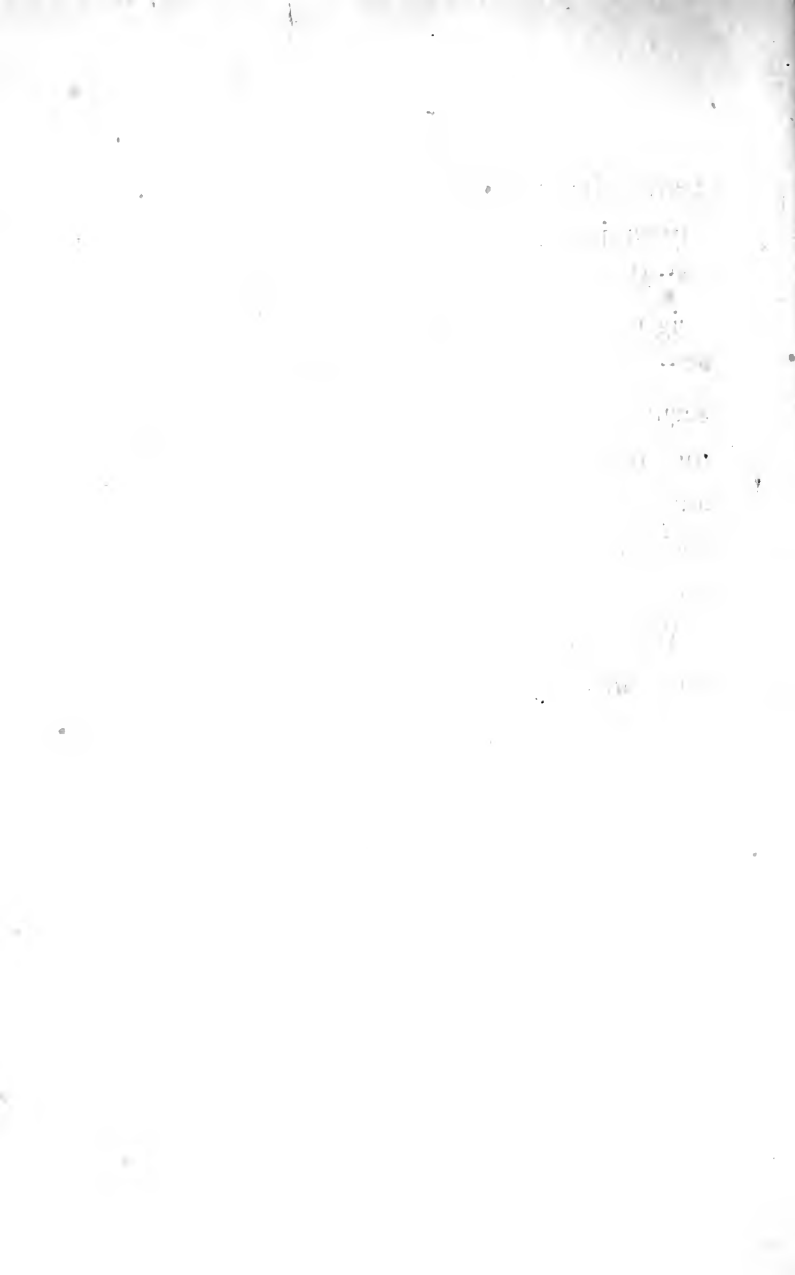
“I never will,” answered Brice, gently smoothing my hair ; so that I felt uneasy,

fearing he was thinking more of me than of my subject.

“Because fictitious honesty is not clear and bright as yours has always been.”

“It is sin,” replied Brice; but here he seemed more and more bent upon ascertaining the colour and texture of my hair. I am afraid his lips, tired of talking, were very desirous to find out whether my cheeks had the velvet softness he said they had.

What triflers even the sternest of men are sometimes!



CHAPTER XIX.

Virtue the strength and beauty of the soul
Is the best gift of Heaven ; a happiness
That e'en above the smiles and frowns of fate
Exalts great Nature's favorites ; a wealth
That ne'er encumbers, nor to baser hands
Can be transferred : it is the only good
Man justly boasts of, or can call his own.
Riches are oft by guilt and baseness earned,
Or dealt by chance, to shield a lucky knave,
Or throw a cruel sunshine on a fool.
But for one end, one much neglected use,
Are riches worth your care ; for Nature's wants
Are few, and without opulence supplied :
This noble end is, to produce the soul ;
To shew the virtues in the fairest light ;
To make humanity the minister
Of bounteous Providence ; and teach the breast
That gen'rous luxury the gods enjoy.

ARMSTRONG.



CHAPTER XIX.

I do not know whether it was that Brice wished to obliterate from my mind the fact of the new reserve which he had set up in his accounts, or if he was really pleased by the patience with which I had taken it ; but he was very good with me all that next week. He seemed, I thought, more reluctant to leave me of a morning, and we would stand lingering for five or ten minutes at a time in the little garden which fronted our house, and which, catching the sun and being carefully tended by me, yielded almost the brightness

of a country aspect. On the Saturday he returned earlier than usual, and we went together to spend the early summer evening at my old cottage home, now so soon to be given up.

Mamma was always so glad to have us, and it always did my heart good to see papa and Brice together. Much as papa had liked him before, it was evident my husband was now almost more than an ordinary son to him. I liked to see them walking the quarter-deck, as we were accustomed to call the strip of gravel in front of the outer gate, arm-in-arm, and deep in subjects which seemed to have an unflinching interest for them.

Presently I changed places with him, and sent my husband in to talk with mamma about the new house which they were thinking of taking at Nottinghill, and with regard to which some difficulty had arisen.

I took papa's arm, feeling a protection in it, and we went further down the road, for this

quarter-deck mode of walking always wearied me. Papa, who knew that I kept the accounts so much to my husband's approval, regarded me rather in the light of a partner, and was fond of talking with me of business.

"What a capital fellow Brice is," he said to me, "He seems to me to be myself over again, with the advantage of youth in his favour."

"You are getting on then, papa," I said, "surely and steadily, I hope."

"Yes, surely, and not too fast. You keep the accounts, and not know that?"

"I keep the accounts as a clerk you know," I said, "But Brice's private book, of course, is the real key." I had not been told to be secretive, and I thought it wisest not—secrecy to my mind is always allied to sin.

"He is right to keep the whip hand of his own business," said papa. "I like a man to act for himself."

I felt more easy ; papa, then, approved of

the plan which had been adopted ; but I think at this time he approved of anything Brice proposed, or carried out.

“He does every thing well,” said papa, “and his knowledge of business is thorough. He sees and understands everything. We only want more capital—but that’s the best of it—he always keeps our ventures within our means.”

“That is a good thing,” I answered thoughtfully.

“And his character for thrift and honesty is gaining ground,” said, papa, with exultation. “It is becoming known, that without any cant or humbug, he is yet cheerfully setting his face against such practices of trade as he deems dishonest. I confess they seemed to come so much in the ordinary way of business, that I never thought of them myself in the light he does.”

“I am very glad he does not countenance things simply because they are usual,” I said,

waiting, almost breathless, that I might hear more praise of my husband. But there came also across my jealous fancy a thought which had not occurred before. "If, in any thing, Brice should fail of his duty, as a man of business, then the blame would be greater to him. And just so much as he had set himself against the trade practices, which had become too customary to be regarded any longer as frauds, so the more deep would be his fall—if he should stumble ever so little—and I said to myself with bitter fear, "Oh ! that he had never set up that private book."

My jealousy was so great, that day by day, almost hour by hour, I wished to see his honour shining before my eyes, so that I might lay my hand upon it, and be sure of it. Some people are born with a doubting spirit, a want of easy faith, and have to struggle hard for its possession. I suppose it was so with me. I wanted to see what I believed in. Meta was always ready in her Thackeray mis-

givings, to tell me that there was no believing what you do see.

"What I like," said papa, going on with his praise, "is his strength, he is so strong and determined—if he could have an enemy, I should not like to be that man. I should not like either to make him angry. There is something about his concentrated strength of feeling, which would make his anger very terrible."

I had had this thought, and yet I had had the courage to rouse him once, but I had said to myself, that it would be unwise to do it again.

"Now," said papa, going on, "In that strength of his I find a reproof. When my misfortunes came upon me, I lost strength, and have never recovered it."

"Oh! papa, you have never been weak," I said earnestly.

"Yes," he said sadly, and with emphasis, "I was weak. I was a father, and I refused

to exercise my authority. I let Meta go from under my care."

"The circumstances were exceptional," I said.

"They were, but I acted against my better judgment. Meta went her own way, and we have no longer any influence over her. She has taken up the bitter sarcastic tone of her patroness, and it has warped and spoiled her."

"Is any harm coming to Meta?" I asked, apprehensively.

"Only this, she is encouraging the suit of a man whom she neither loves nor respects—whom she only laughs at indeed—because he can give her wealth."

"Who is he?" I asked, I knew fathers were sometimes captious ; and after all, papa could not find a second Brice very easily.

"Mr. Masterman," said Papa.

"What!" I exclaimed, "the man who is said to have used his first wife so ill. Meta told me what a wretch he was."

"And yet," said papa bitterly, "by some

strange infatuation, she is encouraging him, and that with determination ; even against Mrs. M'Phinn's advice. I have told her I am moving so soon, almost on purpose to please her, and to give her a home. I have begged her to return at once, but she puts me off with plausibilities. I was wrong to part with her ; and a weak act is seldom really retrieved. Our acts fit one into the other, and we can seldom go back to replace a link in the chain. I must abide by it now."

I did not see the necessity of so abiding. I thought if he roused himself he might even now interpose with effect ; but the same temper of mind which had suffered him to leave Meta the freedom of her own choice in the first instance, prevailed now, as I could see very well.

We do not so easily discern the characters of those with whom we live. And it was only now that I began to see my father as it were from a distance that I perceived with pain, but with no loss of respect, how his

easy, generous temper which, by pleasing everybody, had first led him on to fortune, had ultimately induced his ruin.

We talked of Meta until Brice came to call us into the early supper, which was now hospitable and abundant.

It was very pleasant to me to see plenty overflowing the little cottage, which, for a time, had been so barren of luxuries—almost of comforts. I had grown up in the midst of abundance and ever-increasing luxury, and I had seen how quickly riches can take to themselves wings. I should never, so I believed, trust in riches again; but nevertheless, because I did not trust, I was the more thankful for any signs of plenty, looking upon them as evidences of a blessing, without which wealth cannot serve us.

We were a little band of united hearts, who had stood by each other in trouble. My husband had floated the wreck, and no one ever forgot this. They spoiled him, I sometimes thought—my love whom I so idolized,

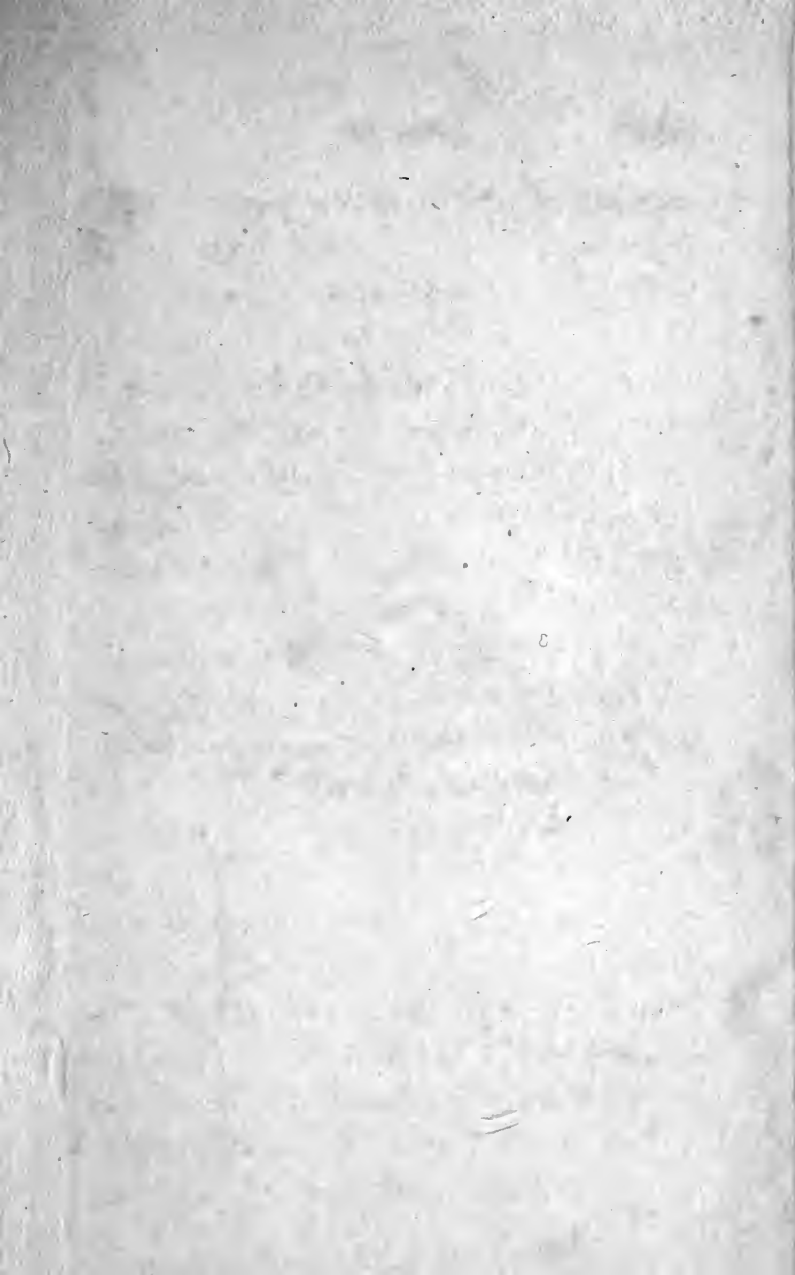
but who had his faults—nay, who had started his private account book, and shut me out of his confidence.

That supper was very nice and pleasant, and in spite of Meta we were merry and joyful with each other. Perhaps I might not see the cottage often again, for the move was very soon to take place, and I lingered a little over this scene of my happy and unforgotten courtship.

Was it not, however, as good as courtship still, when Brice drew my hand within his arm, and we went out of the little gate, with many good nights wafted after us. Brice, who was in good spirits—spirits raised by the subtle ether of appreciation—reminded me that it was a blessing that he had not to go home alone, and as I felt my hand drawn nearer to his manly breast, my heart beat with exultation, and I deemed myself a very happy wife indeed.

END OF VOL. II.





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